Youth Drugs Addiction And Social Intervention – An Investigative Study Of Mizoram.

PL Vanrozama, Dr. C Gobalakrishnan

Abstract: Today Drug addiction among the youth is a widespread problem in many countries including Mizoram. Most of the youngsters in the early age of 17-25 years have been found to be seriously addicted to the unethical substance abuse or drug addiction and they are mostly college and even school going young students. Even the unprivileged and poor children have also been found to be involved in drug abuse/addiction. Over the last two decades or more, countries all over the world have seen an alarming rise in the prevalence of drug addicts among the most productive and crucial segment of its population. If their present lives are drowned under such addictions then the future of the nation would certainly be bleak and dark. This is indeed a serious matter for the Indian society. This paper is discussing the impact of drug usage, causes of drug use, the need for intervention and the methods of prevention of drug addiction among youths with special reference to Mizoram, based on the review of earlier literature.

Keywords: Drug addiction; Substance abuse; Interventions; Mizoram.

1 INTRODUCTION

In the history of humankind there have been many epidemics. Epidemics are diseases which spread so fast that they kill thousands of people in an area within a short period of time. In the modern world a new epidemic has come which has no cure. This epidemic has taken thousands of lives all over the world. This epidemic is called substance abuse, which is usually known as drug addiction. A drug is anything that can be used for medical or non-medical purpose. A drug is a substance which when absorbed by a living body even in small quantities simulates the nervous system and alter the functioning of the body chemistry. Drugs are any substance that can transform the mental activity of the user because they are chemicals that affect the central nervous system. Drugs are basically poisons if a person consume beyond the limit of licit drugs or consume illicit drugs. The term ‘addiction’ is often used interchangeably with related term such as ‘dependence’ ‘abuse’ ‘misuse‘ or ‘problem use’. Drugs transform the process within the cells of the body. Their effectiveness depends on the dose (quantity of consumption) and method of administration. A regular tendency to take this substance is called addiction. The young generations are the most awful victims of evils of drug addiction in Mizoram. Drug addiction as a social phenomenon is all the more troublesome because of its prevalence among youth. Over the last decades or so, countries all over the world have seen an alarming increase in the incidence of drug abuse among the most productive and important section of the people in the society. According to survey in 2018, Mizoram has the highest number of suicide deaths from drug abuse in India and this matter should be resolved with collective efforts of the people of the society. The amount of drugs taken decides the effects.

A small amount acts as a stimulant (speeds up), a greater amount acts as a sedative (slow down) and even larger amount can poison and kill. This is true of any types of drugs. But many drugs have another liability as they straightforwardly affect the brainpower. They can distort the users perception of what is happening around him or her. As a result, the person’s actions may be peculiar, irrationnal, inappropriate and even destructive. Drugs block off all sensations, the desirable ones with the unwanted. So while providing short-term helps in the relief of pain, they also wipe out ability and alertness and dirty thoughts. Drug addiction can only hinder or restrain us from our society today. It restrains the youth from achieving goals or dreams in life. It leads to harm a person body, causing problems in family organization, and contribute to the criminal behavior in society. Drug addiction affects all the aspects of human life as it harms the rational functions and leads to unsafe sexual behavior that can result in contracting any of the sexually transmitted diseases like HIV/AIDS. Drugs Addiction in the World Context In the 21st century, the drug menace has become a global problem. Most citizens and societies encounter problems of drugs and drug related disorders. It is estimated that the money involved in illegal hardcore drug trade is second only to global trade in arms. Drug abuse has grown to such outrageous proportion that it creates untold problems for public health and social order in most countries. All over the world there is an increased in the consumption of any type of drugs. Jonash Hartelies (2013) in his booklet, ‘The World-A Drug Scene’ has said, a drug syndicate can operate over two or three continents, creating problems for police and customs in many countries. Drugs may be produced in one country, refined in another, smuggled through a third, sold in a fourth and the profits laundered in a fifth country. This has enormous problems for law enforcement agencies in the worldwide. At present it is estimated that 275 million people used illicit drugs, such as cannabis, amphetamines, opioids, and cocaine. Cannabis is most used with 192 million users. Some 31 million of people who use drugs suffer from drug related disorders. It is estimated that there are almost 11 million people who inject drugs (World Drug Report 2018). Among injected drugs user at least 1.5 million are living with HIV, 5.5 million with hepatitis C, and 1 million with both HIV and hepatitis C, according to the latest World Drug Report, (released in Vienna, 26 June 2019) by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Throughout the
world, the use of illicit drugs appears to be generally stable, though it continues to be rising in several developing countries. Heroin, cocaine and other drugs kill around 1.5 million people each year (WHO 2019), shattering families and bringing misery to thousand other people. Illicit drugs undermine economic and social development and contribute to crime, instability, insecurity and the spread of HIV. Global opium production amounted to 10,500 tons in 2017, the highest estimate recorded by UNODC since it started monitoring global opium production at the start of the 21st century. Almost half of the opium harvest in Afghanistan, which continues to be the world’s largest producer. Afghanistan grows more opium poppies than anywhere else in the world. In 2017, the United Nations estimated that there were over 300,000 hectares of land in the country that was being used to grow the crop.

Drug Addiction in India Scenario

Over the last two three decades, drug consumption has become one of the biggest problems affecting millions of children and youth in India. There are few states and cities in India which have taken the lead in drug consumption. Punjab in the Northern part of India has been facing a drug epidemic since a very long time, though it is considered to be one of the most developed states of the country. Even our national capital is not lagging behind. States like Mizoram, Manipur, Goa and Mumbai are other prominent states affected by the problems of drugs. In India, Marijuana, LSD, Cocaine, Heroin and prescription drugs are abused by youth in India. A few other commonly abused groups of drugs include Opioids, Hallucinogens and Inhalants. Cannabis or ganja as it is popularly known in India is an illegal drug but is very popular. Cannabis is illegally cultivated in large quantities and smuggled out of the country. A part of it is locally consumed. Ganja smoking is popular with the youth especially students in India. It is sad to note that in India it has not drawn the required attention as it has in European countries. The Indian youth are today exposed to all kinds of hardcore drugs. Ganja smoking is very common, brown sugar and heroine are easily available and cocaine which was not available in India is now available in the cosmopolitan cities too. The country is slipping in and out of consciousness with the rampant hike in the number of people addicted to drugs. Recent reports and studies reveal the growing problem of drug addiction in India, especially among the younger generation. According to reports, almost 74 per cent of Indian families have one adult member addicted to drugs (MSJE, Feb 2019). A survey conducted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (2019) had pointed out that around 73.2 million people in India are drugs users. Out of the 73.2 million, 8.7 million are cannabis users, 2 million of opiates and various other illicit drugs. Among the drug users 17 per cent to 26 per cent of these people can be classified as dependent users who need urgent treatment. Drug addiction and its impact among women are becoming more evident in India. Licit substances like tobacco and alcohol are widely prevalent while abuse of illicit substances like cannabis, heroine and other opiates including opium is recognized throughout the country. The abuse of psychotropic substances and other liquid drugs are also increasingly being recognized.

Substance abuse (alcohol, tobacco and other drugs) is associated with a range of physical, psychological, social and occupational problems.

Drug Addiction in Mizoram Scenario

Mizoram on the eastern frontier of India, sharing borders with Myanmar is currently facing one of the worst illicit drug related crisis in its history. Drug addiction, over the past two decades or more, has taken an endemic form in most of the states of the Northeast and gradually it has been on the rise in the entire region. With over a 1,400 deaths due to drug addiction in Mizoram since 1984, a recent survey has revealed that drug addiction in Mizoram has been showing an upward trend. The main killer drug in Mizoram was Proxyvon/Parvonspas, followed by heroin. However, in the present situation Heroin replaced Proxyvon as the main killer drug. In Mizoram, drug abuse/ drug addiction has gone up to an alarming level. At least 65 people, including 12 women, died from drug abuse in Mizoram in 2017, and the state recorded maximum number of drug-related deaths in 2004 with 143 people succumbing to addiction according to the records of the state Excise and Narcotics department. The Social Welfare Department, government of Mizoram record reveals that more than 300 people lost their lives in 2018 due to drug addiction. In the state most of the Narcotic drugs seized by the Mizoram Police, Mizoram Excise Department and NGOs which comes from Myanmar across the border. There are around 25 thousand people who consume narcotic drugs in Mizoram, they are mostly youth. Majority of them are using heroin IDUs with sharing of needle and syringes with others. As a result 70% of the IDUs became HIV infected. In the present scenario, the Mizo society has been entirely changed than the earlier times, now in the urban areas the families are getting nuclear both the parents are working thus they are unable to give a qualitative time to their kids, importance and faith in moral values have also been reduced in the families, elders are getting neglected, children most of the times look out of their homes for someone to share and express themselves and this also sometimes leads them to involve in the wrong peer groups. Communication, interaction, understanding among the family members is reducing gradually and moreover the modern education system also has posed a lot of pressure on the students, among the poor families due to sheer poverty parents and children all are indulged in earning for livelihood, there is no money and time to attain education and thus illiteracy leads to the involvement in unethical actions and bad company of friends. In such conditions youngsters feel truly alienated; they lose their wisdom and want to get rid of their anxieties, tensions and depression that ultimately show them the way to drugs or substance abuse. They believe that drugs make them forget all their tensions and pressures and make them feel free and devoid of any troubles, they rather feel better in the numbness caused by the drugs than bearing any tension due to their practical lives. In 2017, Department of Social Welfare, Government of Mizoram conducted the Baseline Survey on Extent and Pattern of Drug Use in the State, the survey has revealed many shocking facts about drug addicts in the State. The survey was carried out in all the eight districts of Mizoram, interviewing 2633 drug users whose average age was 28 years. Of the 2,633 drug users interviewed, 80 per cent were males. The study reveals that
most of the drug users said they started taking drugs from 7 to 12 years since they started schooling, and most of them started smoking before they consume drugs. The study found that pharmaceutical opioids are the most common abused drugs in Mizoram, followed by heroin, sedative drugs and inhalants (volatile solvents). The survey also revealed that of drug users interviewed 49.5 per cent were singles while 24.2 per cent were divorced. Another 20.7 per cent of drug users were married. It was also revealed that three-fourths of the drug users still lived with their parents. 78.6 per cent of the injecting drug users said drug was introduced to them by their friends, of these 65.8 per cent shared syringes with their friends. The study also shows that overdose was commonest among heroin users with 47 per cent followed by dextro-propoxypheine (like spasmo-proxyvon and parvon spas). The survey also emphasized the importance of providing education to the youths and prevents them from using substances at early age to reduce drug addiction among youngsters.

Causes of Drug use
The causes of drug use problems aren’t lucid, although there are many factors that are thought to play the task. There could be as many reasons as there are drug-takers. People use drugs for different purposes and reasons of their own. People just don’t get into drugs suddenly or by accident. Their starting point are very significant and look apparently quite not dangerous, but in reality it is not so as they think. Most of the addicts never know they would become addicts in future. Therefore, a simple mental logic has bribed them i.e. this is only a small tablet or small injections so it will not cause any damage. Some of the reasons why people take drug are sense of belongingness often makes people to be addicted by the feelings and actions of others. The best way to belong to a group is to subscribe to the group ethos; to feel what the group feels, to think what the group thinks, to eat what the group eats, to drink what the group drinks and to do whatever the group does. At this age the young ones are not able to decide between rights from wrong easily. We want to be accepted and admired by persons who are important to us, and for the youngster his friends are the most important persons. So person will be ready to follow the demands of his/her friends, even when he or she does not like it. Drug users, since they have rather poor self-esteem, seek approval for their behavior from their peers. So they often convince others to join them and develop their habits as a way of winning acceptance. Drug use blocks out physical and psychological pain or negative emotions and mind-set about oneself, one’s present situation or past experiences. Life can be dreary and unfilled, particularly for the unemployed. There are also psychological and sociological explanations. The psychological explanation says that drug abuse is a learnt habit. The person finds that drugs can make him or her forget the unhappy thoughts and gives pleasure. So whenever he or she has a discontented thought or wants happiness, he or she turns to drugs. Person with a poor self-esteem and unable to cope up with the problems of life; turns to drugs as a solution to their problems. The sociological explanation tells us that drugs are glamorized by society through social media, music and newspapers. The media promotes drugs role model and children imitate them. There are several reasons why drug usage soon gets changed to drug addiction. At a very basic level this happens because the person concerned feels a desperate need to deal with stress, to get a momentary high or to just fit in with his or her peers, as happens in the case of youngsters. It soon reaches a stage where this need becomes much more than other needs in life and the person begins to believe their survival depends on those drugs.

Consequences of Youth drug addiction
Despite the enormity of the problem in India, systematic research has not been undertaken to clearly document the combined social, economic, health and psychological impact of substance abusers. However, even the limited available data indicates the association of substance abuse related problems with several spheres of life. Worldwide, the uses of injecting drug use reported in 148 countries, of which 120 report HIV infection among this population. Substance abuse (alcohol, tobacco and other drugs) is associated with a range of physical, psychological, social and occupational problems. It is a complex problem having medical and social ramifications which impacts all social strata. It affects not only the user and their families but also all sections of the society. Young people who persistently abuse drugs often experience an array of problems including academic difficulties, health-related problems like mental health, poor peer relationships and involvement in the juvenile activities. Moreover, there are consequences for family members, the community, and the entire society. The consequences include domestic violence and infection with HIV, as well as the financial burden. Broadly consequences of substance abuse/addiction can be explained in following headings:

Academics
Declining grades, absenteeism from school/college and other social activities, and increased potential for dropping out of school/college are problems associated with youth drug addicts. Cognitive and behavioral problems experienced by drug using youth may interfere with their academic performance and also present obstacles to learn from their classmates.

Health and Safety
Psychoactive drugs affect the central nervous system and act by altering a person’s feelings, thoughts and behaviour. They act by directly affecting the brain or the central nervous system leading to various difficulties in health and behavioural problems. Injuries due to accidents such as vehicle accidents, physical disabilities and diseases are the effects of possible overdoses are among the health-related consequences of youth drug addicts. Disproportionate numbers of youth involved with drugs and face an increased risk of death through suicide, homicide, accident, and illness. Trauma, violence, organ system damage, various cancers, unsafe sexual practices, premature death and poor nutritional status of families with heavy drinking fathers are associated with drug addiction. The two killer diseases, drug addiction and HIV/AIDS are very closely related and are considered socio-medical problems. The injecting drugs users lead to HIV transmission. The biggest concern that relates drug use to HIV infection and the development of AIDS are people who take drugs are likely
to engage in risky behavior and participate in unsafe sexual behavior. They will increase the risk of transmitting it to others or become reinvested themselves. The effect of drug on health and behavior is an important issue. There are many diseases that can be complicated and intensified by drugs. It causes adverse changes in the immune system because its use can cause rapid decline in the health of the person. Individuals who suffer from addiction often have one or more accompanying medical issues, including lung and cardiovascular disease like stroke, cancer and mental disorders. It is a common misunderstanding that drug enhances sexual performance and pleasure. In fact it disrupts normal healthy sexual relationships. It may increase the desire for sex, but reduce the ability for performance. Men who are intoxicated are often unable to perform sexual act (impotence) and it will generally leave them feeling numb and senseless. Woman who uses drugs may find it difficult to conceive because it will affect the ovulation and the menstrual cycle. Use of drugs, affect sperm production in male, it reduce the number of sperm male is able to produce and may also make sperm less active. Using drug, during pregnancy can cause complication such as miscarriage, birth defects like low birth weight, mental disability, physical deformation and internal organ damage. These limited examples illustrate the catastrophic health-related consequences of drug addicts among youth. Besides personal and family distress, additional healthcare costs and loss of future productivity place burdens on the community.

Mental Health
Mental health problems such as depression, developmental lags, apathy, withdrawal, and other psychosocial dysfunctions frequently are linked to drug addiction among youth. Substance-abusing youth are at higher risk than non-users for mental health problems, including depression, behavior problems, personality disorders, suicidal thoughts and attempted suicide. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among college students in the country. Marijuana use, which is prevalent among youth, has been shown to interfere with short-term memory, learning skills.

Peers
Drug addicts’ youth are often alienated by their peers. Youth using drugs also often disengage from school and other community activities, depriving their peers and communities of the positive contributions they might otherwise have made.

Families
In addition to personal adversities, the addicts of drugs by youth may result in family crises and jeopardize in many aspects of family life, sometimes resulting in family dysfunction. Both siblings and parents are deeply affected by drug-involved youth. Drugs use can drain a family’s financial and emotional resources. The damaging effects of drug addicts on the family are perhaps those, which pose the greatest threat to the nation. When own members of family addicts drugs, be it parents, child or a relatives, it causes disruption and disharmony within the family and every member of the family suffers. Drugs addicts are often obsessed with the nation that everything is going on smoothly around them, including the needs and situation of family members. Their ignorance leads to a breakdown of family functioning.

Drug addiction, The Need for Intervention
Youth are using different kinds of drugs, even school going children and street children have access to different varieties of drugs. A lot of money is wasted on drug worldwide. The individual is affected in many ways, the addicts physical and mental health is affected. His finance get drained, his family life is jeopardized. Addiction causes industrial and road accidents as it impair judgment. It affects one's efficiency and hence results in the loss of manpower. An addict becomes undependable and is never trustworthy. Indulging in stealing, pawing, gambling and telling lies are just part of an addict’s life. In the developing country like India, addiction acts as a stumbling block to development and productivity. Drug addiction serves as a major cause of domestic violence, wife battering and crime. With no resources to handle these as the medical psychiatric problems and with limited know-how to handle it as a burning social issues, very often instead of facing the problem, we quite comfortably turn to the other way round or sweep it under the carpet, and pretend as though in the midst of many social problems to be tackled, drug addiction in our country is negligible. As a responsible citizen of India and as a person with social responsibility we should realized and understand the needs for intervention, intervention with various groups at various stages. Intervention refers to our own efforts to curb the drugs addiction either at the demand point or at the supply point. There are many youth who have not yet experimented with drug, quite a few who have experimented and some who have become confirmed addicts. We cannot apply the same intervention strategy to all the people. But at the same time all these people are in need of intervention, and the intervention should be with a view to prevent, control, treat and rehabilitate. Once a person experience with a drug and starts taking habitually or becomes an addict, it is very difficult to redeem the concerned person. So the ideal stage of intervention is prevention, before the person’s first experimentation with drugs. In order to have an ideal preventive strategy it is good to tell people about the evil of drugs even when they are very young. Teaching young people even when they are in their early young adulthood, school going children, children and colleges with message against addiction as youngster in school and colleges very easily gets exposed to drugs. Drug addiction is a progressive disease, a deadly disease. Just as a patient having a health problems, say heart or cancer disease is in need of medical treatment, an addict is also in need of treatment. Like any other disease drug addiction too can be medically managed. It is a disease that needs physician and psychiatrists. An addict should not be treated isolation; moreover unless an addict is convinced of the effect of treatment, the efforts others take may be totally in vain. A proper follow up, especially monitored by a trained counselor is necessary for making treatment effective. This therapy should not aim at the addict alone but also the members of the family. Rehabilitation is an important aspect of intervention. There are many drug users who want to quit their habit of using drugs. But many questions come up in their mind preventing them from opting for treatment or quitting the habit on their own. One of the important
questions is will the society accept me once I stop using drugs. This is a genuine question as the addict will have a feeling of guilt and shame. Rehabilitation is the art of teaching the ex-drug abuser to cope with the demands of real life situation which includes the demands of the society. When drugs become an addiction for a person however it is extremely tough to get rid of it but it is not impossible either, with the constant help, motivation and guidance of the family, friends, Counselors/Rehabilitators/Doctors and with the personal will power of the addicted person, drug addiction can be rectified. Although a pre-check or precautions are always essential to be taken so that the youngsters do not even think to get indulged in drug misuse, home is a foremost place where a personality is being brought up and the family is best supporter and the guide for a young child. If the parents try to create an open and a harmonious relationship with the young children of the family then there are less chances of distraction and unethical involvement of the children. But at the later stage when the child has already gone on a wrong path, the responsibility of the family and the parents’ increases double.

**Intervention Strategies**
An intervention strategy is a carefully planned process that may be done by family and friends, in consultation with a professional (interventionist) such as an alcohol and drug counselor. During the intervention, these people gather together to tackle about the consequences of addiction and ask him or her to accept treatment in the rehabilitation centre. Below are some of the interventions strategies handled by rehabilitation centre’s and de-addiction homes under the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, government of India.

**Individual Counselling**
Counseling is a primarily verbal response involving a great deal of dialogue where counselor responds to the drug users in a ways that helps them explore and clarify their concerns. The core conditions which are actually attitudes expressed during therapy are empathetic, understanding, respect for client as a person of worth and value, active and attentive listening and use of non-verbal communications.

**Psycho Education**
Psycho education is a process by which the therapists imparts knowledge to the drug users about the illness and with his or her continual assistance, modify their attitudes. It means where the addiction gets to know more about the nature and treatment available. It is also to implement better coping skills and other preferred interaction with the affected member. It basically focuses on imparting facts about drug addict like causes and clarifies the doubt and misconception regarding drug addict.

**Education on Relapse Prevention Techniques**
Relapse Prevention Techniques (RPT) is a cognitive-behavioral approach to the treatments of addictive behaviors that specifically addresses the nature of the relapse process and suggests coping strategies useful in maintaining change. Relapse Prevention Techniques (RPT) is a form of therapy that helps on individual cope with stressors that may cause relapses.

**2 CONCLUSION**
Drug addiction is a curse for any person because it not only spoils but destroys a life. Youngsters are innocent and they thoroughly need a right guidance, moral education and a healthy environment at their homes, schools and workplace. Parents, teachers and elders should always be empathetic and communicative with the youngsters so that they can easily talk out their issues and feelings, all they need is a good listener and a guide who can hold their hands and show them the right path. If the youngsters are secured and they know that they have some trustworthy people in their lives with whom they can freely express their feelings and problems then there is no scope for any wrong way to intervene in their minds and life. The major factor for the high prevalence of drug addiction or HIV/AIDS infection in Mizoram is a lack of positive intentions in policy making by the government to curtail the epidemic in the countenance of easy availability of drugs due to drug trafficking across the border with Myanmar and other neighboring states. This factor is supplemented by youth culture besides societal and family problems. In Mizoram, attention is now being paid to the general population as well as known risk groups. Type of health facilities provided to drug addicts and HIV/AIDS patients should be improved along with rehabilitation, vocational training, establishing more quality de-addiction centers and awareness programmes. All the programmes need to be sensitive to gender, discrimination, and stigmatization and be suited with the cultural environment of the state. Moreover, the spread of such reprehensible habits among the relatively young segment of society ought to be arrested at all cost. The nature of preventive programmes on drugs addiction and HIV/AIDS need to look beyond behavioural modification. Proper inspection of the infected persons as well as drug traffickers is needed. Larger community and family participation is also required in the state. Above all, There is a need for the government enforcement agencies, the non-governmental philanthropic agencies, and others to collaborate and supplement each other’s efforts for a solution to the problem of drug addiction through education and legal actions is crucial to make the interventions very effective in the state of Mizoram.

**3 REFERENCES**


[8] WHO report 2019 (United Nations publication)


