



## The Role of Perpetuating Factors in the Development of Substance Use Disorder Among Adolescents

Mujeebullah Khan Doutani<sup>1</sup>, Jamila Doutani<sup>2</sup>, Naseeb Ullah<sup>1</sup>, Abdul Qadir<sup>1</sup>, Naila<sup>1</sup>, Abdul Wasay<sup>1</sup>, Sana Ullah Kakar<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Psychiatry, Balochistan Institute of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences (BIPBS), Quetta, Pakistan

<sup>2</sup>Department of Psychiatry, Bolan Medical College and Hospital, Quetta, Pakistan

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**Correspondence to:** Mujeebullah Khan Doutani,  
Department of Psychiatry, Balochistan Institute of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences (BIPBS), Quetta, Pakistan.  
Email: [doutani@yahoo.com](mailto:doutani@yahoo.com)

#### Declaration

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Adolescence is marked by physical, emotional, and environmental changes, making individuals vulnerable to substance use. Personality traits, family dynamics, and emotional instability are significant perpetuating factors contributing to the rising rates of adolescent substance use globally and in Pakistan. **Objective:** The present study aimed conducted to explore the underlying causes or perpetuating factors for substance use among adolescents in Pakistan. **Method:** The qualitative study was conducted both from male and female participants of substance use disorder. The sample of the study consisted N=06 participants with the use of Substance use ( $M=03$ ,  $F=03$ ) with the age range of 18 to 24. The semi structure interview was conducted to explore the Perpetuating factors which lead towards the use of addiction. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by independent researchers. **Results:** Thematic analysis was used as an approach to analyze the data collected through semi structured interviews. The themes were merged under the main three heading these were: ecological factors, constitutional vulnerability factors and psychological or individual factors which were the main triggering factors tend towards the usage of substance use among adolescents. **Conclusion:** The study reveals key themes such as personality traits, mood shifts, low self-esteem, and ecological influences as significant factors. Participants emphasized the impact of family issues and interpersonal conflicts, highlighting the importance of addressing these areas in understanding and managing substance use disorder among adolescents.

### INTRODUCTION

The period of adolescence is a time of different changes in physical, psychological and ecological aspects (Gray & Squeqlia, 2018). At the time of this emotional instability period, adolescents are keen to adopt those behaviors which lead them towards various health Perpetuating's such as substance use disorders. Various studies identified that the ratio of substance use among adolescent world widely is higher than older people, although there are also some exceptional associated with the traditional use of drugs (Zhai et al., 2020). According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2018), early (12–14 years old) to late (15–17 years old) adolescence is a critical Perpetuating period for the initiation of substance use, and that substance use is highest amongst young people aged 18–25 years in both High Income Countries (HICs) and Low and Middle Income Countries (LMICs). In Pakistan, the prevalence of substance use among adolescents is increasing high at the rate of 40,000 per year, which is making Pakistan one

of the most substance or drug affected countries in the world (The Dawn Newspaper, 2018).

Different researches showed that significant relationship between substance use and personality traits which initially developed as a risk factors (Hicks, Durbin, Blonigen, Iacono, & McGue, 2012; Malmberg et al., 2012). The research studies exploring critical predictors, or significant risk factors for different substance use behaviors have shown the personality traits to be significant determinants (Hicks, et al., 2011; Nees et al., 2012; Turiano, et al., 2012). Personality traits are also shown to play a significant function in the development, duration, and prognosis of problematic substance use behaviors (Anderson, Steen, & Stavropoulos, 2017; Lackner, Unterrainer, & NeuBauer, 2013). It has also been revealed that two personality dimensions, such as, sensation and impulsivity seeking as correlates of substance use and other forms of externalizing behaviors (Quinn & Harden, 2013).

Psychodynamic Theory: According to this theory,

addicts are self-medicating. Addictions are a symptom of an underlying psychological problem. Addiction is a maladaptive coping strategy, when the underlying psychological issues are addressed, the addiction will remit.

### Rationale of the study

In the recent few years, the usage of the both those drugs (alcohol hash & heroin) are most common in Pakistan because of their easily availability. The substance related problems are alarmingly increasing in Pakistan although different studies highlight the different aspects related to substance use but, therefore it is a need to explore the underlying causes or Perpetuating factors for substance use to tackle this issue on priority.

### METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted to explore the underlying causes or perpetuating factors for substance use among adolescents in Pakistan.

#### Research Design

A descriptive qualitative study design was conducted, which allowed for the understanding and description of perpetuating factors associated with substance use among adolescents in Pakistan.

#### Sampling Strategy & Sample

The data were collected from 06 substance users (5 alcohols abuser & 3 heroin abuser) with the age range of 18 to 24. The data were collected by purposive sampling technique. The data were collected from two different centers of drug treatment in the Baluchistan province of Pakistan. The data collection method was semi-structured interviews through the interview after taking the informed consent of concerned individual and after taking permission from the institute. The data which gathered from interview were transcribe and translated and analyzed for the interpretation of the results.

#### Research Tools

The semi structured interviews were used as a tool to collect data from the participants who gave consent to participate in the study. The interviews were conducted in Balochi language (native language of Baluchistan) and all the interviews were audio-recorded. The interviews were recorded on two recording devices to ensure the backup in case one device is not working. The researcher was also accompanied by assistant who took notes during the interviews. The duration of an interview ranges from 30 minutes to 45 minutes on an average. The open ended questions were asked by the researcher and respondents were encouraged to give detailed responses.

#### Analysis

All the interviews were transcribed and translated into English. The translated and the original transcription data files were shared with language expert to ensure the quality of translation and to grasp the exact meanings

which were communicated by the participants. The researchers conducted qualitative data analysis using inductive thematic analysis, which aimed to identify a set of main themes which captured the diverse views and feelings expressed by participants. The conceptual themes were extracted from the highlighted points in the next stage. This process of coding / highlighting themes was carried out for all the interviews. In the final stage, the similar themes were grouped together under the main category or major theme. To improve inter-coder reliability, the coders each used the code book independently and disparities in coding were solved by discussion. After that, a final file was being developed, and categories and themes were constructed.

### Ethical Consideration

The study got approval from ethical board of research and permission was granted to collect data from the concerned drug abuse treatment centers. The participants were recruited and permission was taken from the individual/participants. The participants were explained about their right to withdraw from the study if they are not willing to continue and if they are not comfortable.

### RESULTS

The research aims to explore the underlying causes or Perpetuating factors for substance use among adolescents in Pakistan. Unstructured interview methodology of qualitative research was used to collect information from the respondent. Respondents were patients of drug users. Six interviews were conducted in total from the participants of drug users, with the use of paper and pencil medium, voice recorder. All the verbatim of the interviews were gathered and then themes were generated using thematic analysis.

#### Description of Themes

##### Theme 1: Ecological factors that promote Substance Use

In this theme different Perpetuating factors have been identified and extracted the themes are; family use of drugs, low socio-economic status, family instability, family pressure, lack of support and authoritative parenting style. The respondent reported that the family usage of drug or any substance is very important element to drag youth attention as if any of the family member specially in joint family system any member smokes a cigarette, the child initially develops a habit of passive smoking and at later start smoking whenever any trigger effects them. The verbatim of participants was;

*“My cousin uses this, it makes him energetic and elevate the mood as well”*

family instability also a Perpetuating factor when individual do not receive financial support, the youth in Pakistan is more conscious about branded and it's growing fast in our societies. The more demanding society needs when youth not able to fulfill them they might use the substance to overcome this complex.

“Outside even in educational institutes, you only survive when you maintain your standards otherwise being bullied”

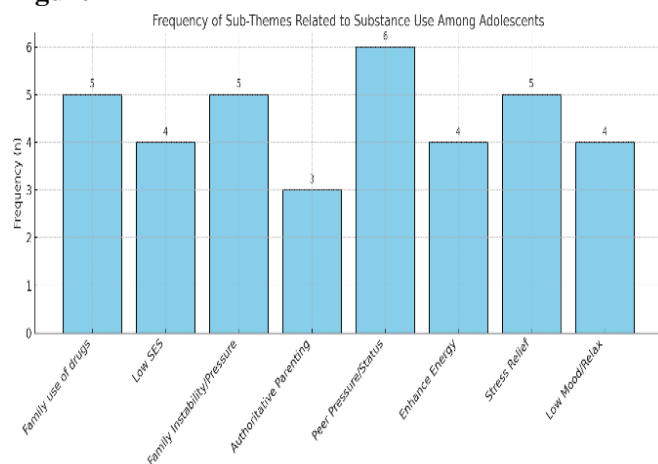
Furthermore, those children brought up in wealthy families with strict over-control and follow up were more vulnerable to substance use. The main reason is that they start to use substances when they get relative freedom. On the other hand, communication gap also is the main reason when parents only ask to do what they want instead of exploring their children perspective. As reported by one of the participants:

“My father has set norms which need to be fulfill, he doesn't have concern what we want and where we need his support, He don't have enough time to spend with us”

**Table 1**  
Summary of Perpetuating Factors for Substance Use Among Adolescents (n=6)

Major Themes	Sub-Themes	Frequency (n)	Sample Participant Quotes
Ecological Factors	Family use of drugs	5	“My cousin uses this... it makes him energetic.”
	Low socio-economic status	4	“The more demanding society needs. we might use the substance.”
	Family instability / pressure / lack of support	5	“My father has set norms. doesn't have concern what we want.”
	Authoritative parenting style	3	“They start to use substances when they get relative freedom.”
Constitutional Vulnerability (Peer Influence)	Peer pressure / status consciousness	6	“My friend asked me to try drug. we both became addicted later.”
	Enhance energy	4	“Taking a little dose helps me focus more.”
Psychological Factors	Temporary avoidance / stress relief	5	“I use it to relax and forget my problems.”
	Low mood / need to feel relaxed	4	“It helps me to boost up.”

**Figure 1**



**Table 2**

Illustrative Verbatim Quotes for Each Major Theme and Sub-Theme

Major Theme	Sub-Theme	Illustrative Verbatim Quote
Ecological Factors	Family use of drugs	“My cousin uses this, it makes him energetic and elevate the mood as well.”
	Family pressure & instability	“My father has set norms... he doesn't care what we want... he doesn't have time for us.”
	Low socio-economic status	“You only survive when you maintain your standards, otherwise you're bullied.”
Peer Influence / Vulnerability	Peer pressure	“My friend asked me to try drug... we both became addicted later on.”
	Enhance energy	“Taking a little dose of drug helps me focus more on my work.”
	Status consciousness	“Outside even in educational institutes, you only survive when you maintain your standards.”
Psychological Factors	Temporary avoidance / stress relief	“I used it to relax and forget my problems.”
	Relief from depression/anxiety	“It helps me to boost up.”
	Perceived physical weakness	“I am surprised by the significant amount of weight she has lost.”

**Theme 2: Constitutional vulnerability factors related to the use of Substance Use**

It has been indicated that the peer pressure is the main factor for adolescent's substance use. This indicates that peer pressure was the main enforcing factor for youth substance use; this is because most of the youth follow the characteristics of their friends and manifested what their friends practice based on shared characteristics. Ecological network was the main important means for assess of different substance. Hence, to encounter the problem the family should follow and control their child's daily activity, and education health programs should focus on providing health education focusing on the harmful effect of substance use on health, ecological life, and economy.

The participants also shared that they started drugs in Friends Company just for fun but couldn't stop later on and started using heavy dozes and it becomes part of their routine.

“My friend asked me to try drug when I was staying at his place, he was not addicted but just for the sake of fun wanted to try with me. We both become addicted later on”.

Another significant explanation that participants provided was about enhanced energy which results into better output in their personal chores. Thus, the sub-theme of enhanced energy was extracted from the data. One participant explained about this theme in these words:

“Taking a little doze of drug help me to focus more on my work

Another participant explained that:

“it helps me to boast up”

### Theme 3: Psychological factors that became the reason of substance use

The results concluded that youth use substances to relax, drive happiness, temporarily forget problems, get relief from stress, resolve depression and anxiety and also stimulate themselves. Regarding the relationship between the psychological factor and substance use, one participant immediate response was:

“I Used to relax and forget their problem”

In case of our participants’ physical appearance, they felt weakness in their physical strength and consider that after usage of the drug they are more strengthening. There are verbatim of the Participant:

“When my mother does appear, the first thing I notice are her high, full cheekbones. Last time, they were anchored by puffiness. I am surprised by the significant amount of weight she has lost”

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the underlying causes or perpetuating factors for substance use among adolescents in Pakistan in Pakistan.

In present study, the factors associated with family were the cause of changing pattern of drug abuse in women and this probability was higher in those women who abused drugs since early childhood and those who have addicted parent or partner because drugs are accessible to them. The findings are in harmony with another research study (Rezaei, 2017). This study revealed that individual characteristics as well as factors associated with family and community were the cause of addiction in women (Rezaei, 2017). According to Rezaei (2017), the ecological factors caused onset and ongoing drug usage among women. Therefore, the need is to recognize and understand different aspects of this problem in order to formulate treatment plan.

The current study participants stated family as an

important and vital factor for drug abuse. Among all the family factors, few were common such as lack of warmth and emotional expression, absence of a safe and congenial environment at home, weak attachment between children and the parents, and family members abusing drugs. Absence of monitoring and monitoring of children by the parents were stated amid the factors determined from the interviews. The family relationships were stated to be more vital than the structure of family. There are various ways in which family can play a role in developing drug abuse. For instance, absence of congenial and amiable home environment would raise the chances of troublesome and unhealthy behavior in children (Frisher et al., 2007).

The theories of ecological learning and ecological control state that stronger family cohesion and parental monitoring reduces the drug abuse (Korhonen et al., 2008). The role of parents as models in abusing drugs have been shown in past research (Rhodes et al., 2003). Culture-based family education programs to show the essential role of families in prevention of drug abuse would have benefits for community (Naqavi, Mohammadi, Salari, & Nakhaee, 2011). In the present study, the peer pressure has been shown to be significant and majority of the research participants stated statements associated with stereotypes, “Because of bad company, I started using drugs”. Most of the studies show the influence of factors related with peers in drug abuse (Naqavi, Mohammadi, Salari, & Nakhaee, 2011; Rhodes et al., 2003; Scherrer et al., 2012).

### CONCLUSION

It can be seen that themes ranging from personality factors including higher incidence of depressive and mood shifts, self-esteem to ecological factors are considered significant features that reflected by the participants. The findings also highlight the need to address family issues and interpersonal conflicts.

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