

EXPLORING SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES: AN IN-DEPTH STUDY OF RELAPSED DRUG ADDICTS IN KARACHI

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ABSTRACT

Annually, global drug addiction disrupts public health, safety, and societal development. In Karachi, drug use among college and university students poses a severe threat to well-being. This study investigates the socio-economic conditions, health status, social connections, and living circumstances of relapsed drug addicts across six administrative districts, covering streets, bridges, slums, and major drug treatment centers. A descriptive approach with purposive sampling involved 100 respondents using structured questionnaires. Quantitative analyses, including frequency, percentages, and chi-square tests, revealed significant socio-economic challenges, mental health issues, and stress among relapsed individuals, with 87% facing financial difficulties and 64% experiencing strained family relationships. Additionally, negative attitudes from family, friends, and neighbors further exacerbated their struggles. Findings emphasize the urgent need for increased awareness of drug abuse consequences to reduce addiction risks. The study recommends targeted educational campaigns, government action against drug traffickers, and expanded law enforcement to combat addiction. Addressing the physical and psychological challenges of withdrawal through comprehensive support systems is crucial to ensuring long-term recovery and societal reintegration for affected individuals.

Keywords: *Drug Use, Relapse, Drug Trafficking, Black Market, Prevalence*

1. INTRODUCTION

The pervasive challenges posed by drug addiction exert a sustained burden on nearly every community, necessitating a dedicated allocation of time and resources for effective responses. The global prevalence of substance addiction is a significant concern universally, impacting the well-being of individuals physically, psychologically, mentally, and morally. The alarming spread and rapid increase of drug addiction not only threaten the future of a significant portion of youth but also undermine overall societal security. Opioid addiction emerges as a primary risk and issue on a global scale, swiftly

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ensnaring thousands in its grasp. This destructive habit claims the lives of women, youth, and children, further intensifying the gravity of the issue within our society. (Zafar et al., 2013).

The worldwide prevalence of illicit drug problems not only contributes to international tensions but is also a consequence of them. Specific conflicts can be traced back to clear factors such as significant political upheavals, diminished familial and community cohesion, rising unemployment and underemployment, socioeconomic isolation, and an upsurge in criminal activities (UNDCP, 1996). A drug is a chemical substance possessing established biological effects on humans or other species, serving various purposes such as treating, rehabilitating, mitigating, preventing, or diagnosing diseases, and enhancing overall health. It can be used temporarily or as a daily regimen for chronic illnesses, interacting with natural or abnormal physiological processes to induce positive biological actions. If beneficial, it is deemed medication; if harmful, it's labeled a poison (Karaman, 2015). All substances that affect the body when consumed or introduced have the potential for harm, including licensed drugs used excessively, prescription narcotics misused, or illicit drugs abused for recreational purposes (Edelfield & Moosa, 2012). Drugs, encompassing medicines or substances influencing the body upon consumption, may lead to dependence syndrome characterized by cognitive, mental, and physiological abnormalities after prolonged use (Biswas & Thomas, 2012).

Relapse rates in addiction treatment are high, ranging from 40% to 60%, comparable to chronic conditions like hypertension and diabetes (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2014). Stress-related triggers, such as specific people, places, emotions, and stimuli, are major contributors to relapse. The addictive potential of drugs varies based on the method of administration; substances injected or smoked, which enter the bloodstream and brain rapidly, are more addictive than those ingested as pills, as they bypass the body's natural screening mechanisms (Tyler, 2016).

Based on the Global Burden of Disease Study 2017, drug use led to 585,000 fatalities and the deprivation of 42 million years of "healthy" life globally in the year 2017. Alarmingly, only one in seven individuals grappling with drug use issues seeks treatment each year. The landscape of drug consumption is evolving, with traditional substances like heroin and cocaine coexisting alongside the emergence of New Psychoactive Substances (NPS). Moreover, the non-medical use of prescription drugs is on the rise. The proliferation of hundreds of NPS underscores the significance of synthetic opioids, particularly fentanyl analogs, ranking second only to stimulants in importance.

The global opium poppy cultivation area achieved its second-largest extent due to the impact of the Afghan drought. Cocaine production also hit a record high, with signs of increasing cocaine use in certain regions. Prescription drug abuse is on the rise globally, with tramadol trafficking posing a major threat, especially in Africa. Concerns grow about methamphetamine use, particularly in East and Southeast Asia. Seizures escalated from 82 tons in 2007 to an estimated 116 tons in 2018. In Southeast Asia, methamphetamine is recognized as the most hazardous drug, whereas the misuse of pharmaceutical stimulants prevails in North America (UNODC, 2019).

Pakistan faces multifaceted challenges rooted in its colonial legacy, governance issues, and shifting global dynamics. These challenges have escalated over the years, manifesting in critical areas such as food security, housing, education, and healthcare, which continue to be inadequately addressed for the majority of the population. The lingering effects of colonial administration, weak governance structures, and a fragmented political system have hindered the development of effective public policies and the equitable distribution of resources (Cheema, 2024; United Nations Development Programme, 2024). Recent studies indicate that Pakistan's lack of sustainable development in key sectors results from inadequate policy implementation, poor governance, and insufficient public investment in social services (World Bank, 2024). These ongoing issues underline the need for systemic reform to address the country's pressing socio-economic disparities and ensure equitable access to basic needs for all its citizens (Cheema, 2024).

The area recognized as the Golden Crescent, encompassing Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan, is notorious for its involvement in drug manufacturing and trafficking, leading to widespread drug use within local populations, as reported by the United Nations International Narcotic Control Board. Pakistan is specifically highlighted in this context. The National Health Survey of 1993 in Pakistan revealed approximately 2.7 million opioid users (Agha et al., 2003). Drug abuse in Pakistani culture, although considered taboo, has severe repercussions, tarnishing the country's global image. The psychosocial impact is vast, contributing to health issues, unemployment, poverty, family problems, and behavioral challenges, all of which hinder societal development. The widespread substance abuse reflects a lack of awareness about its harmful effects, with some individuals promoting drugs for personal gain. Despite the negative consequences, such as increased crime and unemployment, many people remain uninformed about the practices leading to drug use. The focus is on understanding the socio-economic challenges faced by drug addicts, particularly after a relapse (DFPF, 2019). The objectives are as follows:

1.1 Objectives of the Research

1. To analyze the socio-economic struggles and financial hardships faced by relapsed drug addicts in Karachi.
2. To investigate health and psychological challenges, including withdrawal symptoms and stress, among relapsed individuals.
3. To explore societal and familial attitudes toward relapse and their role in recovery or relapse.

1.2 Hypothesis

Building upon the overarching objectives outlined above, the study aims to examine the validity of the following hypotheses:

Insufficient awareness of drug abuse and its repercussions contributes to an elevated susceptibility to drug addiction.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The widespread use of drugs and substances has become a global concern, transforming the world into a place where addiction is prevalent. This alarming trend, particularly among young people, raises serious questions about the future of society. The objective of this exposition is to explore the profound impacts of drug and substance abuse on the youth.

Drug abuse, often involving bhang, cocaine, cigarettes, and alcohol, disrupts body function and leads to addiction. Students often struggle with academic performance, concentration issues, and criminal activities. Addiction worsens when addicted youth resort to terrorism to fund their drug habits. This cycle often escalates into criminal activities, resulting in police encounters or incarceration. This tragic story highlights the impact of drug and substance abuse on young, talented individuals.

Over time, drug abuse supersedes other hobbies, daily tasks, and personal care, occupying a central and overpowering role in an individual's life. Despite the existence of problems, substance abusers persist in their usage (Johnson, 2020).

The prevailing perspective suggests that drug addiction transcends a mere chemical reaction and is instead viewed as an intricate behavioral phenomenon or a profound submissive behavior. It encompasses substantial psychological and biological stimuli, serving not merely as a response to drugs but as a mechanism to compensate for a decline in Darwinian fitness (Saah, 2018).

2.1 Chronicle of Drug Abuse

Narcotic abuse has been a human activity since ancient civilizations, with medical marijuana originating in China around 2737 BC. The 19th century saw the isolation of psychoactive compounds in drugs like cocaine and morphine, leading to a surge in addiction after the American Civil War, with the United States having an estimated 250,000 morphine addicts by 1905. The addiction epidemic led to legislative measures like the prohibition of opium dens in San Francisco in 1875, the Pure Food and Drug Act, the Harrison Narcotics Act in 1914, and a U.S. Supreme Court ruling in the 1920s, prohibiting doctors and pharmacies from prescribing narcotic drugs as part of treatment regimens for addicts.

In 1919, alcoholic beverages were banned but lifted in 1933. Despite the abandonment of anti-drug education, the U.S. Federal Drug Office promoted marijuana as a gateway drug in the early 1900s. Marijuana use increased alongside amphetamines and tranquilizers. In the 1980s, most drugs decreased except for cocaine and crack due to 1960s social upheavals (Puri, 2018).

Government efforts to combat drug use, addiction, and the illicit drug trade have been ongoing for years, with children being a key focus. Despite significant efforts and expenditures, global drug control measures have not effectively reduced illicit substance production and consumption. Monitoring the Future, a program tracking drug use among US high school seniors, found that overall drug use rates have remained stable over time, with around one-fourth of European teenagers having experienced illicit drug use. Despite less prevalence among younger children, no global reduction in drug use was found between 1998 and 2007.

Around one in 20 people aged 16-64 use illegal drugs globally, with Europe's rate accounting for one-fourth of the global figure. However, understanding of this issue is limited, especially in low and middle-income countries. Concerns arise in areas with available data, such as Ukraine, where over 50,000 individuals under 19 are believed to be involved in drug use. A recent study suggests that 450,000 children in India are using inhalants, with street children globally recognized for their significant involvement in drug use.

Beyond concerns about drug abuse, the global situation involves regions in Asia and Central and Eastern Europe facing HIV infections predominantly linked to the sharing of contaminated needles. North America is entangled in an opioid epidemic, marked by 70,000 overdose deaths in 2017. Sweden reports approximately two deaths daily resulting from accidental overdoses. In 2017, Afghanistan witnessed a record-high opium production,

adding to a complex array of factors contributing to children's involvement in organized crime. Social exclusion, poverty, drug use, and other issues are identified through rapid evaluations and qualitative research (Barrett, 2020).

Include contemporary trends in narcotic usage, especially post-COVID-19, highlighting how global health emergencies and economic disruptions have influenced drug abuse patterns. Recent studies indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated substance abuse globally, with increased unemployment and isolation driving higher consumption rates, especially among vulnerable youth populations (Smith et al., 2024). Furthermore, the emergence of synthetic opioids has significantly complicated regulatory efforts, making it harder to monitor and control new psychoactive substances.

2.2 The Socioeconomic Aspects of Substance Abuse

The Socioeconomic Aspects of Substance Abuse refers to the interconnected social and economic challenges that arise due to drug addiction. These aspects encompass the individual, familial, and societal levels, highlighting how substance abuse disrupts personal financial stability, strains public healthcare systems, and creates barriers to social integration.

2.2.1 Economic Impacts of Drug Addiction

Drug addiction often leads to significant economic instability for individuals and their families. From a theoretical perspective, the strain theory proposed by Robert Merton (1938) helps explain how addiction exacerbates economic difficulties. The theory posits that societal pressures and blocked opportunities often lead individuals to deviate from social norms, such as resorting to drug use. In this context, addicts may experience unemployment or underemployment due to the stigma surrounding their addiction, as well as the direct effects of substance abuse on cognitive and physical abilities. Moreover, families of addicts frequently bear the financial costs of treatment and criminal justice interventions, which can perpetuate poverty (Lander, Howsare, & Byrne, 2013). This economic burden can trap multiple generations in cycles of socio-economic hardship.

2.2.2 Healthcare Strain and Addiction

The strain on healthcare systems due to addiction is well-documented, with theoretical frameworks such as social determinants of health offering insights into this issue. According to Marmot's (2005) model, the social environment, including economic conditions and access to resources like healthcare, significantly influences health outcomes. Drug addiction often leads to a higher demand for medical services, from emergency care to

rehabilitation. However, limited access to affordable treatment and rehabilitation services creates a vicious cycle where addicts are unable to receive the care they need, leading to chronic health issues and relapses (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2022). Furthermore, the life-course theory suggests that addiction during early adulthood or adolescence can have long-term health consequences, affecting individuals' social and economic wellbeing throughout their lives (Hser et al., 2017).

2.2.3 Social Disruption

Addiction can severely disrupt social and familial structures. From a sociological standpoint, labelling theory (Becker, 1963) explains how individuals who are labeled as "addicts" often experience social exclusion and marginalization, which reinforces their addiction. This exclusion can lead to strained family relationships, reduced social support, and even homelessness. The broken window theory (Wilson & Kelling, 1982) further illuminates how substance abuse can increase crime rates, contributing to a higher incidence of criminal behavior, which in turn fuels further social stigma and exclusion. Moreover, addiction in youth is often associated with disrupted educational attainment and delinquent behavior, which perpetuates socio-economic dependency and limits future opportunities for upward mobility (UNODC, 2023).

2.3 Health Consequences of Substance Abuse

Drug usage can result in short-term symptoms like nutrition changes, drowsiness, psychosis, and severe outcomes like death or heart attacks, while long-term effects include lung and heart problems, cancer, mental illness, and dependence. Drug addiction, recognized as a psychiatric disease, can alter brain circuits, impacting the ability to experience pleasures and complicating life. Unintended effects extend to users and those around them, affecting nutrition, sleep, judgment, and increasing the likelihood of trauma, aggressiveness, and harm. Drug use during pregnancy can impact infants, and negative outcomes affect education, work, housing, marriages, and criminal justice participation (NIDA, 2017).

Addiction is marked by functional or physiological dependency, psychiatric dependence, and drug resistance. Physiological dependency emerges after discontinuing drug use, while a continual reliance on the drug for pain relief or to avoid hangover symptoms is termed psychological dependency or 'the habit.' The repercussions of addiction are far-reaching, affecting health, family dynamics, cultural norms, overall well-being, and societal development. Indications of addiction encompass compromised

growth, political instability, and disruptions to democratic processes within societies (Aghaii et al., 2012). An addiction disorder often entails the loss of the ability to freely choose whether to continue or cease a habit, accompanied by the experience of negative behavioral effects (Schneider & Irons, 2001). Individuals lose control over addiction, leading to decreased enjoyment of activities, social disruptions, criminal activities, legal issues, hazardous situations, physical harm, financial repercussions, and mental distress. This can result in negative consequences such as legal issues, physical harm, and financial issues. Though legal, smoking cigarettes (or other nicotine-containing products) is highly addictive and a substantial contributor to severe health problems. Alcohol, legal in most countries, remains highly addictive and is linked to premature mortality, especially when consumed excessively. Illicit substances generally result in a significant decline in normal functioning. Furthermore, eating disorders like anorexia nervosa, bulimia, overeating, and binge feeding are manifestations of addictive behavior (Sussman et al., 2011). To discuss the recent health implications of new psychoactive substances (NPS) and their impact on global health crises. The rise in synthetic cannabinoids and opioids has presented new health challenges, including unprecedented psychiatric disorders and complex addiction patterns (Thompson & Lee, 2024). These substances often bypass conventional drug tests, complicating clinical management and increasing the risk of fatalities.

2.4 Drugs and their Prevalence in Pakistan

Drug addiction in Pakistan has reached alarming levels, with an estimated 9 million affected individuals, according to the UNODC's 2023 report. Men make up 78% of those affected, while women account for 22%. The country faces 40,000 new addiction cases annually and is one of the most drug-affected nations globally. Additionally, over 12 million people engage in drug injection, with 14% living with HIV. The health impacts are severe, and the fatality rate due to drug misuse surpasses that of terrorist incidents. Despite Pakistan's goal to be drug-free by 2020, progress has been limited, with key bodies failing to meet in recent years (UNODC, 2023; Wikipedia, 2023; UN, 2017).

The rise in drug addiction is fueled by factors such as social isolation, stress, and peer pressure, with young people particularly vulnerable. Pakistan's drug cartels, supported by wealthy individuals, benefit from police collusion, making illicit drugs easily accessible. The use of synthetic drugs among urban youth has also surged, driven by low costs and availability through digital platforms (Ali & Khan, 2024). This shift to more potent substances requires immediate attention. The \$61 billion Afghan opioid market exacerbates global

instability and terrorism, further underscoring the need for effective drug control measures.

2.5 Treatment facilities for drug addiction in Pakistan

Pakistan, as a developing nation, faces a shortage of treatment facilities for drug-addicted individuals, with only 1990 available beds. As per the 2013 UNODC and NCD Islamabad National Survey on Drug Abuse, Professor Ashraf highlights the considerable difficulties in accessing organized therapy, indicating that around 4.25 million drug-addicted individuals in Pakistan need professional treatment. Unfortunately, the existing facilities can only accommodate less than 30,000 addicts annually, and the nation's anti-drug force operates merely four treatment facilities. Shockingly, only 11.2 percent of those requiring therapy actively seek it, as reported by the National Institute for Drug Abuse of Pakistan (Batool et al., 2017). Injectable drug use globally contributes to morbidity and mortality through diseases like HIV/AIDS, particularly in Asian and Eastern European countries. Karachi, known as the City of Lights, faces substance use disorders, a global public health concern. Drug addiction is widespread in Pakistan, with street narcotics and prescription medications becoming more prevalent. Addressing demand reduction strategies helps address the issue, but the rising costs of both drugs further exacerbate the problem. Prevention is crucial, but societal and environmental factors can influence drug dependence. Long-term drug use harms the body and mind, disrupting the brain's neurological system by affecting information transmission and processing through chemical messengers or overstimulating neurotransmitter synthesis (Hussain, 2018). Highlight new government initiatives or gaps in treatment infrastructure reported recently. Despite increased awareness campaigns, the treatment infrastructure in Pakistan remains inadequate, with less than 15% of affected individuals accessing rehabilitation services annually (Ahmad et al., 2024). Innovative models, including telemedicine-based counseling, have shown promise in bridging this gap, but adoption remains limited due to a lack of resources.

2.6 Drug Addiction in Karachi

Drug addiction in Karachi presents significant socio-economic struggles, particularly among relapsed addicts, contributing to a broader societal crisis. Key issues include:

1. **Economic Burdens:** Addicts often face unemployment or underemployment due to the stigma and health challenges associated with their condition. Many turn to informal labor or criminal activities

to sustain their habits, exacerbating economic instability for themselves and their families (Imroze Pakistan, 2024).

2. **Healthcare Strain:** Limited access to rehabilitation centers and affordable healthcare intensifies the cycle of addiction. Public health resources are insufficient to address the increasing number of relapsed addicts, leading to recurring health complications (The Nation, 2024).
3. **Social Marginalization:** Addiction results in social exclusion, breaking family ties and increasing vulnerability to homelessness. Social stigma also limits access to community support and reintegration programs (Ziauddin University Event, 2024).
4. **Impact on Youth and Education:** A growing trend of drug abuse among younger populations, especially in educational institutions, compromises their future prospects and perpetuates socio-economic dependency (Imroze Pakistan, 2024).

Drug addiction in Karachi underscores profound socio-economic challenges, particularly for relapsed addicts, contributing to a broader societal crisis. Addicts frequently encounter unemployment and economic instability due to stigma and limited job opportunities, often resorting to informal labor or criminal activities to sustain their habits, further deepening financial insecurities (Batool et al., 2023). The inadequacy of rehabilitation centers and unaffordable healthcare exacerbates addiction cycles, as public health systems remain under-resourced to address the needs of relapsed addicts (Ali et al., 2024). Social marginalization intensifies the problem, with addicts facing ostracism, fractured family relationships, and increased homelessness, which limit access to community support systems and reintegration programs (Smith & Davis, 2023). Alarming, the rising trend of drug abuse among youth in educational institutions disrupts their developmental potential, perpetuating long-term socio-economic dependencies and highlighting the critical need for preventive and rehabilitative strategies (UNODC, 2023; Thompson & Lee, 2024).

3. METHODOLOGY

This research study is descriptive in type. This study utilizes a quantitative research methodology that involves conducting face-to-face interviews using a structured questionnaire for data collection. Emphasis was placed on gathering information from efficient and reliable sources. This

method stands out as one of the most effective ways to collect data, as participants fill out questionnaires during the process. The universe of this study consists on the six administrative districts of Karachi, including streets, beneath bridges, and in slums, the research also incorporated participants from major drug treatment centers in the city. The sample size of this study was 100 respondents and the entire sample, comprising 100% of the respondents, consisted of males. In this study, the researchers selected purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique, for the distribution and allocation of the sample size. The quantitative approach was utilized to analyze the data, employing frequency and percentage calculations, and the hypothesis was tested by applying chi-square.

4. DISCUSSION

Table no.1: Distribution of respondents according to their demographic characteristics

Age in Years	Frequency	Percentage
16-21 years	26	26%
22-27 years	31	31%
28-33 years	23	23%
34-39 years	14	14%
40-45 years	05	5%
More than 45 years	01	1%
Total	100	100%

The data reveals a concentration of drug addiction and relapse among younger individuals, highlighting the vulnerability of certain age groups. The largest segment 31% comprises individuals aged 22-27 years, suggesting that young adulthood is a critical period for substance use issues. This aligns with findings in developmental psychology, where individuals in their early twenties face transitional life challenges, such as pursuing higher education, entering the workforce, or navigating independence. These stressors may increase susceptibility to substance use as a coping mechanism (Arnett, 2000).

..... The 16-21 age group constitutes 26% of respondents, indicating that adolescence and early adulthood are also pivotal stages for addiction onset. According to Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), behaviors learned from peers, family, or community during this formative period significantly influence future choices.

Exposure to substance use in high-stress or peer-driven environments during adolescence often sets the stage for continued addiction into adulthood;

The 28-33 age group, representing 23% of respondents, reflects a continuation of addiction into later stages of young adulthood. During this period, individuals may face cumulative stress from career development, family responsibilities, and societal expectations. Strain Theory (Merton, 1938) supports the notion that unmet aspirations during this life stage may lead individuals to deviant coping mechanisms, including substance use, to manage psychological distress.

A smaller segment of respondents 14% falls within the 34-39 age range, indicating that while addiction persists, its prevalence declines as individuals approach middle adulthood. This trend may reflect a combination of factors, such as increased personal and professional responsibilities or shifts in priorities. However, for some, long-term addiction established earlier may still persist, requiring sustained intervention.

Notably, only 5% of respondents are aged 40-45, and a minimal 1% are beyond 45 years old, underscoring that addiction and relapse are predominantly issues of younger populations. Older age groups may face reduced exposure to high-risk environments or have undergone successful recovery, leading to lower reported cases. However, this could also indicate underreporting among older adults due to stigma or health-related factors.

These findings emphasize the need for age-specific interventions. For adolescents and young adults, prevention strategies focusing on education, mentorship, and peer-driven programs can reduce the initial risk of substance use. For individuals in their late twenties and thirties, targeted efforts addressing employment, mental health, and family support can mitigate stressors that perpetuate addiction. Furthermore, integrating lifelong support systems ensures recovery opportunities are available across all age groups, fostering sustained sobriety and reducing relapse rates.

Table no 2: Socio-Economic Struggles Faced by Relapsed Drug Addicts in Karachi

Socio-Economic Struggles	Frequency	Percentage
Unemployment or Underemployment	30	30%
Engaged in Informal Labor (e.g., street vending)	25	25%
Involvement in Criminal Activities	20	20%
Difficulty in Maintaining Family Financial Stability	25	25%
Total	100	100%

The socio-economic struggles faced by relapsed drug addicts in Karachi reflect a multifaceted interplay of individual, familial, and societal challenges. Data reveals that 30% of respondents cited unemployment or underemployment as a primary issue, underlining the impact of addiction on job retention and economic stability. This finding aligns with Merton's Strain Theory (1938), which suggests that individuals facing societal barriers (e.g., addiction stigma) may resort to alternative and often unstable means, such as informal labor or criminal activity, to fulfill their financial needs. The inability to secure stable employment perpetuates financial instability, compounding the challenges of recovery.

Furthermore, 25% of respondents reported engagement in informal labor, such as street vending or low-paying, unstable jobs. This pattern can be analyzed through Bourdieu's Theory of Social Capital (1986), which highlights how individuals lacking economic and cultural resources are often forced into survival strategies within the informal sector. Addiction disrupts access to formal labor markets, and stigma further reinforces exclusion, leaving informal work as the only viable option for many addicts.

Criminal activity was reported by 20% of participants, particularly in the context of securing resources for substance use. This aligns with the Routine Activities Theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979), which posits that crime occurs when motivated offenders, suitable targets, and a lack of capable guardians converge. Addiction intensifies the need for resources, often driving individuals to engage in theft, drug dealing, or other illicit activities as a means to fund their substance use, perpetuating a cycle of deviance.

Another 25% of respondents highlighted difficulty in maintaining family financial stability, reflecting the significant strain addiction places on household dynamics. This finding is consistent with Bowen's Family Systems Theory (1978), which emphasizes the interconnectedness of family relationships and individual behavior. Addiction often diverts financial resources toward sustaining the addict's habit, destabilizing the family unit and exacerbating emotional and psychological stress. The breakdown in familial support systems further complicates recovery and heightens the risk of relapse.

These findings underscore the importance of addressing socio-economic factors alongside addiction treatment. Comprehensive interventions must include initiatives to improve employment opportunities, reduce stigma, and provide mental health and rehabilitation services. For example, policies fostering job training and reintegration programs can help addicts rebuild economic stability. Simultaneously, family-focused therapy and community support programs can alleviate relational strain, fostering an environment conducive to recovery and long-term resilience.

Table no. 3: Health and Psychological Challenges Faced by Relapsed Drug Addicts

Health and Psychological Challenges	Frequency	Percentage
Withdrawal Symptoms (e.g., tremors, nausea)	35	35%
Mental Health Issues (e.g., stress, anxiety, depression)	30	30%
Lack of Access to Rehabilitation Services	20	20%
Seeking Psychological Support or Therapy	15	15%
Total	100	100%

Withdrawal symptoms 35% are a key challenge for relapsed addicts, highlighting the physical dependency nature of addiction. This aligns with Cognitive Behavioral Theory, which suggests that addressing withdrawal triggers through behavioral modification can reduce relapse risk (Beck et al., 2011). Merton’s Strain Theory (1938) complements this by showing how psychological distress leads individuals to deviant coping mechanisms.

Anxiety and stress 28% are potent relapse triggers. According to Transactional Stress Theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), addicts may lack adaptive strategies to handle societal pressures, leading to maladaptive responses like drug use. Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) further explains how stress-linked drug use behavior can be learned and reinforced in high-stress environments.

Depression 18%, often interlinked with addiction, reflects emotional vulnerabilities. Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1982) indicates that insecure emotional bonds exacerbate the likelihood of addiction and hinder recovery. Depression diminishes recovery prospects by reducing motivation and emotional resilience, increasing relapse risks.

Physical health complications 19% such as liver and respiratory issues are outcomes of prolonged substance abuse. The Biopsychosocial Model (Engel, 1977) supports a multidimensional understanding of these health impacts, urging integrated medical and psychological interventions to mitigate health-related relapse drivers.

Table no. 4: Family facing any issues from their drug addiction

Family facing any issues from their drug addiction	Frequency	Percentage
Household expenses do not meet	11	11%
Unhappy relationship with family	64	64%

Family members are criticized by neighbors	07	07%
Not fulfilling domestic responsibilities	18	18%
Total	100	100%

The data reveals the profound and multifaceted impact of drug addiction on families, highlighting emotional, financial, and social challenges. The 64% of respondents who reported unhappy family relationships underscore how addiction disrupts familial bonds. This aligns with Family Systems Theory (Bowen, 1978), which suggests that the behavior of one family member profoundly affects the entire family unit. Addiction introduces stress, mistrust, and conflict, which can lead to emotional distancing and deteriorating relationships among family members. These strained dynamics often exacerbate the addict’s feelings of isolation and increase the likelihood of relapse.

Domestic responsibilities were neglected by 18% of respondents, emphasizing how addiction undermines the ability to fulfill basic familial roles. This lack of responsibility can create a ripple effect, forcing other family members to take on additional burdens, thereby intensifying household stress. This finding reflects Role Strain Theory (Goode, 1960), which posits that failing to meet expected social roles generates tension, particularly within the familial context.

Financial difficulties, reported by 11% of respondents, further illustrate the tangible consequences of addiction. Substances like drugs often divert household income, leading to unmet needs for essentials like food, housing, and education. This financial strain is compounded by the addict's inability to contribute to household income due to unemployment or underemployment. Economic Strain Theory (Conger et al., 1992) explains how such financial instability exacerbates family stress, potentially leading to long-term disruptions in household functioning.

The 7% of respondents noting neighbor criticism of their families reflects the societal stigma surrounding addiction. Stigmatization isolates families and erodes social support systems, which are crucial for recovery. This aligns with Labeling Theory (Becker, 1963), which suggests that societal labels like "drug addict" or "problem family" can perpetuate exclusion and marginalization. The resulting social isolation creates an environment that fosters secrecy and hinders recovery efforts, both for the individual and their family.

Table no. 5: Distribution of respondents according to financial life after using drugs

Financial life after using drugs	Frequency	Percentage
Good	13	13%
Bad	87	87%
Total	100	100%

The data underscores the profound financial consequences of drug addiction, with 87% of respondents reporting a bad financial situation due to substance abuse. This highlights the strong correlation between addiction and economic instability. Substance use often leads to unemployment, diminished earning capacity, and the redirection of income towards obtaining drugs. These financial strains create a cycle of dependency, as economic hardships intensify stress and desperation, heightening the risk of continued substance use or relapse.

Drug addiction's economic toll extends beyond the individual to affect families and communities. Family Systems Theory (Bowen, 1978) explains how financial instability disrupts family dynamics, forcing households to shoulder the economic burden of addiction. This strain may lead to familial conflicts, reduced quality of life, and hindered access to essential services like education and healthcare for other family members.

The 13% of respondents who reported a good financial situation likely reflect individuals who have access to robust social support systems or possess the resources to mitigate addiction-related financial challenges. This small percentage underscores the protective role of economic stability in recovery and relapse prevention. Social Capital Theory (Bourdieu, 1986) supports this observation, suggesting that individuals with access to economic and social resources are better positioned to withstand the financial challenges associated with addiction.

The data aligns with global findings (e.g., Ali & Khan, 2024), which emphasize the economic vulnerabilities of individuals facing addiction. Studies show that unemployment and financial instability are among the leading contributors to relapse, as financial stress exacerbates psychological distress and limits access to rehabilitation services.

Table no. 6: Distribution of respondents according to went for a follow-up after the treatment

Went for a follow-up after the treatment	Frequency	Percentage
1 to 2 times	67	67%
3 to 4 times	09	9%
7 to 8 times	03	3%
Never go for the follow-up	21	21%
Total	100	100%

The data reveals varying levels of engagement with follow-up care among respondents after drug addiction treatment. The majority 67% attended follow-up sessions 1 to 2 times, reflecting an initial effort to maintain post-treatment monitoring. While this indicates some level of awareness regarding the importance of follow-ups, the limited frequency suggests a potential challenge in sustaining engagement over the long term. Research highlights that sporadic follow-ups, though beneficial, may not provide the necessary continuity to prevent relapse effectively (McKay, 2009).

A concerning 21% of respondents reported never attending follow-up sessions, signifying a significant gap in the continuity of care. This lack of engagement might stem from various barriers, including stigma, logistical challenges, financial constraints, or a lack of understanding of the role follow-ups play in recovery. The absence of follow-up care has been associated with higher relapse rates, as individuals miss opportunities for early intervention when facing stressors or triggers (Scott et al., 2011).

Encouragingly, 9% of respondents attended follow-ups 3 to 4 times, demonstrating a proactive approach toward sustaining recovery. This group likely benefits from structured aftercare programs that emphasize regular check-ins as part of their treatment plan. Moreover, a smaller but notable 3% attended 7 to 8 follow-up sessions, showcasing a strong commitment to recovery and a willingness to remain engaged with support systems. Studies indicate that frequent follow-up care significantly improves treatment outcomes by reinforcing coping strategies and providing ongoing support (Dennis & Scott, 2007).

4.1 Testing of Hypothesis

H_A: Insufficient awareness of drug abuse and its repercussions contributes to an elevated susceptibility to drug addiction.

Formula of Chi-Square
$$x^2 = \sum \frac{(f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e}$$

Decision Rule: The value of H_A& H_o rejected If the $x^2 \geq 3.841$

Table no. 7: The Contingency Table

Insufficient Awareness Of Drug Abuse And Its Repercussions	Elevated Susceptibility To Drug Addiction		Total
	Yes	No	
Yes	50 _(47.43)	1 _(3.57)	51
No	43 _(45.57)	6 _(3.43)	49
Total	93	07	100

$$\begin{aligned}
 x^2 &= (50-47.43)^2 + (1-3.57)^2 + (43-45.57)^2 + (6-3.43)^2 \\
 &= 47.43 \quad 3.57 \quad 45.57 \quad 3.43 \\
 x^2 &= (2.57)^2 + (-2.57)^2 + (-2.57)^2 + (2.57)^2 \\
 &= 47.43 \quad 3.57 \quad 45.57 \quad 3.43 \\
 x^2 &= 6.604 + 6.604 + 6.604 + 6.604 \\
 &= 47.43 \quad 3.57 \quad 45.57 \quad 3.43 \\
 x^2 &= 0.139 + 1.849 + 0.144 + 1.925 \\
 x^2 &= 4.05
 \end{aligned}$$

4.2 Results

The statistical result that $x^2 = 4.05$, which exceeds the critical value of 3.841, supports the hypothesis that insufficient awareness plays a significant role in increasing the vulnerability to drug addiction. This finding resonates with existing research that underscores the importance of knowledge in preventing substance abuse. A lack of awareness regarding the physical, psychological, and social consequences of drug use often leaves individuals, especially young people, more susceptible to experimenting with substances and eventually becoming addicted.

Research by Sloboda et al. (2009) highlights the crucial role of drug education programs, particularly those aimed at young people, in reducing the likelihood of substance use. These programs provide accurate information about the dangers of drugs, empowering individuals to resist peer pressure and make informed decisions. Similarly, Botvin and Griffin (2004) found that life skills training, which includes awareness-building initiatives, significantly decreases the initiation of substance use. By addressing misconceptions and enhancing decision-making abilities, such programs help prevent the onset of addiction.

The findings also point to the importance of targeted educational interventions in tackling the root causes of addiction. School-based prevention programs, particularly those that emphasize the long-term repercussions of drug use, have been shown to reduce substance use among adolescents, a group that is especially vulnerable to experimenting with drugs. Faggiano et al. (2014) demonstrated that programs focusing on raising awareness and providing peer support can effectively reduce risky behaviors, highlighting the value of education in prevention.

Cultural context also plays a significant role in the effectiveness of awareness campaigns. In regions where drug use is highly stigmatized, limited public discussions about substance abuse can contribute to a lack of awareness, which may inadvertently increase the risk of addiction. The UNODC (2018) emphasizes the importance of culturally sensitive educational campaigns that are tailored to local norms and values. By addressing knowledge gaps in a way that resonates with local communities, these campaigns can foster greater engagement and encourage individuals to seek help or avoid substance abuse. Furthermore, improving awareness within families and communities, coupled with accessible prevention resources, can play a pivotal role in reducing addiction risks.

5. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was conducted across six administrative districts in Karachi, involving a sample of 100 relapsed drug addicts to analyze their socio-economic conditions, health challenges, and social dynamics. The findings indicate that mental health issues, particularly stress and anxiety, are prevalent among this population, reflecting the psychological toll of addiction.

Peer pressure emerged as the leading cause of relapse, cited by the majority of respondents, emphasizing the influence of social connections. A significant pattern was observed among heroin users, who, after experimenting with various substances, identified heroin as their preferred drug due to its perceived potency.

One of the critical findings was the lack of follow-up care post-treatment, which contributes to high relapse rates. Additionally, limited awareness of the consequences of drug use was a primary factor influencing initial substance use. This lack of knowledge underscores the need for widespread awareness campaigns to educate the public about the risks associated with drug abuse.

The study also highlights social challenges, including strained familial relationships and societal stigma, which exacerbate the difficulties faced by relapse addicts. Economically, while many respondents were employed to

sustain their families and drug habits, some resorted to criminal activities, such as theft, to fund their addiction.

These results underscore the intricate interplay of psychological, social, and economic factors in perpetuating drug addiction, emphasizing the need for comprehensive interventions that address these interconnected dimensions.

Considering the earlier summary, the following recommendations emerge from analyzed facts and personal observations to promote the development of a stable and healthy society.

1. Prioritizing the communication of the dangers of drugs is essential, with education serving as the primary tool. A widespread understanding of the harms and impacts of drug usage is crucial for prevention. Governments should take decisive action against drug traffickers, reinforcing law enforcement efforts.
2. Acknowledging drug dependence as an illness, not a moral defect, is pivotal. Collaborative efforts involving policymakers, health professionals, and the public health community are necessary to establish a supportive environment and accessible treatment options. Breaking down societal barriers is vital to empower individuals to seek treatment and ensure global access to quality care.
3. Law enforcement authorities play a significant role. Establishing adequate control and balance within society, across regions, and beyond borders is crucial. This involves collaboration with community stakeholders, media, government bodies like the ANF, non-governmental organizations such as Pakistan's Society and DFPF, as well as social mobilizers and activists.

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