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Substance Abuse and Its Addiction Among Young Adults

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Introduction

Substance use refers to the intake of drugs, like alcohol, caffeine, cannabis, inhalants, tobacco, and other harmful substances that lead to the deterioration of oneself, society, or both. It comprises both physical dependence and psychological dependence. Physical dependence caused by excessive intake of a drug refers to a change in the physiological state in which withdrawal symptoms develop when drugs are discontinued whereas psychological dependence refers to the state of need to continue using the drug even without physical dependence.

Substance use also known as drug abuse or drug addiction is usage of drugs up to a certain level that disrupts the individual return to its normal state or condition prior to the intake. It could range from mild, moderate or severe depending on the drug intake. Addiction can supposedly be a form of drug abuse in terms of severity.

Addiction refers to the need to be associated with something (here a substance) ignoring the adverse effects it can cause. It can also refer to a strong inclination towards repeated use of a substance. The higher the addiction, the higher the risk of developing a substance use disorder (SUD).

Substance use disorder is a multifaceted disorder characterized by unchecked drug intake despite its negative effects. Individuals suffering with SUD exhibit a strong fixation—sometimes referred to as an addiction—on using a particular substance or drug, like alcohol, tobacco, or other psychoactive substances, to the extent that it interferes with their daily functioning.

Once an individual starts increasing the intake of drug, he/she requires more and more dosage to get high. They start forming physical addiction to the drug involving tolerance and withdrawal symptoms. Once they are dependent it becomes very difficult to stop the usage. Attempts in stopping the usage rather intensifies cravings for more drugs.

Symptoms indicating drug addiction:

- Need to take drugs repeatedly
- Increasing drug usage over time to get the same effect
- Burning on cash through medication, despite in affordability
- Maintaining constant supply of medication
- Failure to carry out daily activities

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- Continuing to develop physiological and psychological dependence
- Getting involved in illegal activities to get the drug
- Indulging in risky activities under the influence of the drug
- Failing to stop drug intake
- Experiencing withdrawal effects

The term "substance use/abuse" describes an occasional intake of substances as opposed to long-term, routine, or structured use. Even a few instances of using some substances can cause tolerance and dependency, yet people can take drugs occasionally without getting SUD.

Young adults between 18-25yrs are more likely to indulge themselves in taking drugs and other harmful substances as means of social escape, relaxation, peer pressure or to feel euphoric or even just experimenting. Research suggests that young people take drugs to fit in the social circle, feel accepted by everyone around them, obtain pleasure, seek attention, get relief from depression, anxiety, stress-related issues and excel in academics and co-curricular.

Various factors contributing to young adults taking drugs are early childhood adversity, stressful life experiences, any kind of abuse, prenatal exposure to drugs and harmful substances, genetic predisposition, peer pressure etc.

Addiction and substance abuse in young people is a complex problem that necessitates an all-encompassing strategy for intervention, treatment, and prevention. It is feasible to lessen the effects of substance use and assist young people in leading healthier, more productive lives by addressing the underlying risk factors and offering strong support networks.

Review of Literature

Venkatesh U. et. al., (2024) aimed at finding determinants responsible for drug abuse among young people. The study was done across 15 states in India including 1630 participants aged between 10-24yrs. The results showed that the prevalence of substance use was 1/3rd initiated at the age of 18yrs and rest of it began drug intake even before reaching adolescence.

Rizk H. et. al., (2024) determined the effect of substance use disorder in young adults on clinical characteristics of stroke, mortality and its outcomes. The study consisted of a sample size of 225 young adults out of which 41% that is 93 people were able to meet the criteria for SUD. The study concluded that the increase in deaths were more related to heroin use disorder as compared to other disorders.

Monarque M. et al., (2023) reviewed digital interventions for substance use disorders in young people as it was found to be more accessible and engaging in them. A total of 43 articles were reviewed with describing more than 30 digital interventions including early prevention and treatment. The digital technologies were web based, game based, mobile and computer-based targeting alcohol tobacco, nicotine, cannabis and opioids use.

Chang Y.J. & Chen J.L (2023) assessed the viability of web-based substance use intervention in young adults. The sample size consisted of 1065 participants out of which 539 were controlled and the rest formed the experimental group. The intervention comprised 5 sets of mixed themes based on infographics and animation. There was no demographic relation found between the two variables; the results showed that there was a significant improvement in participants' knowledge, behavioral intervention and web-based intervention.

Schoenberger SF. et. al., (2022) examined the recovery perspectives among young adults with substance use disorder. The sample size consisted of 20 young adults aged between 21-29 years. In-depth interviews were taken to gain information about various perspectives of recovery among SUD patients. As a result, four key elements came into view, first being that recovery was viewed as a means of maturing and leading a normal life free from the limitations of substance use, second, recovery to be successful, it needed to involve several elements, such as mental health

therapy. Third, recovery was viewed as a self-driven process. At last, it was said that healing was a lifetime endeavour requiring dedication and watchfulness.

LePine S. et. al., (2022) aimed at understanding addiction among young adults and correlation between different definitions and substance use behaviors. The sample size consisted of 1146 young adults. Each were presented to an open-ended question of what does addiction mean? It was observed that majority defined addiction in terms of physiological changes, 68% by psychological changes and around 6% by behavioral changes. Very less percentage of young adult defined addiction as combination of a whole; psychological, physiological and behavioral changes. Therefore, results showed that adolescent and young adult's often defined addiction as psychological, physiological and behavioral changes.

DeJonge M. et. al., (2022) analyzed the latent classes of substance use in young adults aged 18-25 years. The research identified latent classes and established their predictors relating to the use of substances like marijuana, alcohol and other harmful substances. Twenty studies consisting of a sample size of 171-21945 were able to meet the inclusion criteria. Fourteen studies identified high and low levels of substance use. The results concluded that predictors of the class provided insight into heavy substance or polysubstance use as well as into the formation of better preventive interventions.

Byrne K. et. al., (2022) examined the relationship between substance use and exploration-exploitation behavior in young adults. The research comprised of 83 young adults aged 18-23. It aimed at finding the connection between substance use and spontaneous eyeblink rate (EBR) using the linear mixed-effect regression. The results showed significant negative interaction between the two ($p<0.001$) and members with regular substance use and low EBR showed expanded double-dealing to those with high EBR.

Brumback TY. Et. al., (2021) assessed psychosocial indicators of substance use in teenagers and young adults. The review comprised 798 young adults aged between 13-25 years. It surveyed the connection between substance use during adolescence and rising young adults as well as social influence, personality and emotional characteristics. Results feature developmentally important factors that differentially contribute to substance use in adolescence and young adulthood. We likewise exhibit the importance of developmentally sensitive analyses that maximize the value of data from accelerated longitudinal plans.

Andersson H. et. al., (2021) examined the differences in demographic and clinical relapse and treatment discontinuation in emerging young adults and inpatients. The study included 149 emerging young adults aged between 18-25 and 350 patients aged 25 and above. Medical records were analyzed, self-report measures were taken for completion status followed by telephone interview after 3 months to check in for relapses. The results showed that emerging adults had a more unfavorable risk profile based on clinical factors, treatment results, and demographics. ADHD and polysubstance use were also found to be the predictors of poor treatment outcomes for emerging adults.

Arterberry B. et. al., (2020) studied the prevalence, remission and treatment linked with substance use disorders (SUDs) among young adults. The sample size included 2057 participants aged between 19-23 attending university/school and 1213 not attending any school or institution. The study found that at least 39.6% of young adults attending colleges were taking substances and 44.5% of not taking attending colleges were also associated with SUD. The results showed that the prevalence of substance usage was higher in young adults who were not attending college or school as compared to those who were.

Shin S. et al., (2018) studied various patterns of childhood adversities and their influence on substance use in young adults. The study included 336 young adults aged between 18-25 years. Latent class analyses (LCA) were done to identify homogeneous group with similar style of childhood adversity. As a result, four distinct groups of young individuals were identified with the help of analyses: Low ACEs (56%), Household Dysfunction/Community Violence (14%), Emotional ACEs (14%), and High/Multiple ACEs (16%). Research confirmed that ACEs occur multiple times rather than once and its victimization is directly related to substance among young adults.

Qadeer R. et. al., (2018) investigated the prevalence of substance use disorders among emerging young adults. There was a total of 9228 research participants aged between 15-39 years and were categorized into three subgroups: early emerging adults aged between 15-22yrs, late emerging adults aged between 23-29 years and last young adults between 30-39 years. It was observed that prevalence for SUD was 8-6.6% and for emerging young adults it was 2.7%. The results concluded that emerging young adults were at higher risk of developing Suds as compared to older young adults.

Esteve A. et. al., (2017) examined attachment and emotional regulation in substance addictions. The sample size consisted of 472 students aged 13-21 years. It was found that risky behaviors related to emotional and behavioral regulation could contribute to the development of an addictive behavior. There could be slight alterations between substance and non-substance related addictions. Findings showed that emotional regulation was associated with addictive behaviors whereas attachment was predictive of non-substance-related addictions. The results also showed gender indifferences with females scoring higher in attachment related issues and males in addiction related behaviors.

Butler L. (2017) formed associations between substance use in young adults and past injuries in the head. The point of the review was to estimate substance use based on past wounds with the help of elements like stress, temper and self-esteem. A study was conducted on a sample size of 897 young adults. The exploration concluded that substance use with odd dangers of cannabis admission was for sure associated with multiple head injuries.

Somani S. & Meghani S. (2016) studied the impact of substance abuse among young adults, The study found that predisposing factors leading to substance abuse were age, gender, family relation, poverty, accessibility and affordability of drugs. The prevalence was found to be more in males than females. The research concluded that drugs played a crucial role in public health vulnerabilities and other issues. It increased morbidity, mortality and contributed to higher crime rates worldwide.

Shorey R. et. al., (2013) studied about early maladaptive schemas of male substance abusers in young adults. Schemas were believed to be the underlying cause of substance use. The study included two group of participants one consisting of 101 young male substance abusers and the other consisting of 175 non-clinical comparison group. The results showed that group who were substance users scored relatively higher than the comparison group on 9 out of 18 maladaptive schemas.

Shin S. et. al., (2013) studied impulsivity and substance use in young adulthood. The aim was to check impulsivity in response to intake of substances. The study consisted of 257 young adults aged 18-25. The study found that there were links of high substance addiction than reckless drinking during young adulthood. Therefore, it suggested that each impulsive sub-trait differed based on substance used.

Nasirzadeh et. al., (2013) held a comparative study about the mental health and substance abuse among youths aged 18-29. The sample consisted of 183 youth with drug abuse behavior and 207 without drug abuse. The findings showed a strong correlation between low education and drug intake. There were evidence of increased psychopathology and mental diseases with experiences of higher rates of stress, anxiety and sadness among youth consuming drugs.

Kumar N. et. al., (2013) examined the profile of substance abused patients admitted at deaddiction center. The study included 83 male patients. The observations were that that majority started taking drugs at the age 20 and alcohol being the most common drug among the patients. There was also significant influence of peer pressure among these. Findings suggested vulnerability towards substance use was more common in young adults as compared to older patients at de-addiction center.

Methodology

Aim: To understand the addiction and effect of substances in young adults

Objective: To comprehend substance use and its addiction among young adults and identifying the fundamental cause and underlying factors of substance addictive behaviors in youth.

Method: Review of Literature, Analysis and Interpretation of the collected Information

Inclusion Criteria: The basis of choosing the research that it should have been conducted in or after 2013. All the related research made during the year 2013-2024 have been included.

Exclusion Criteria: Any research conducted before 2013 was excluded.

Discussion and Result

Substance Use Disorder also widely known as Drug abuse or Addiction has been considered to alter an individual's brain and behavior. It has been classified as a complex disorder involving drug intake or substance use/abuse in a way that can be fatal to the individual. In terms of addiction, it can probably range from mild, moderate or severe. Substance use is usually associated with intense cravings to take the drug, build tolerance and/or withdrawal symptoms after stopping usage.

People can experience problems related to substance use in three ways; intoxication, withdrawal and addiction. These three terms are closely related but hold different meanings from each other. Intoxication refers to the acute state of being under the influence of psychoactive substances whereas withdrawal is also an acute stage but involves physiological and psychological effects of suddenly stopping a substance. Addiction is defined as a chronic condition of using a specific substance despite suffering from the negative consequences of that substance. It was described as being related to either psychological, physiological or behavioural changes or a mix of all by the majority of the young adults.

The terms substance use and substance misuse are frequently utilized conversely, but they hold altogether different implications. SUD, otherwise called habit, is a diagnosable ailment then again, substance misuse, or abuse, are terms that are utilized when an individual purposes a substance improperly or in manner that harms themselves and individuals around them.

Substance use has become a rising health concern around the world. The prevalence of substance abuse among youth is alarming as it not only interferes with individuals' daily life but also negatively impacts their families and societies. It takes a mental toll on an individual's health and responsibilities. Young people are more prone to drug addiction because of the development and growth of brain structures. Taking drugs interferes with the growth and maturing features leading to brain alternations. It also contributes to faulty decision making leading them to indulge in unsafe activities.

According to various studies held, it is evident that young adults are at higher risk of developing substance use disorders, with 1/3rd of substance users aged at 18yrs or less. By comparing older adults with young adults we found that youth were likely more vulnerable to drug usage. Drug usage was also found to be more prevalent in young males than females. A study also reflected that the ratio of students who were not going college and taking drugs to those attending college and taking drugs were rathe high.

The various contributing factors for developing SUD was found to be age, gender, family relations, poverty, low education and drug accessibility. Childhood adversities and maladaptive schemas played a key role in development of substance abuse. Drug intake was associated with higher of rates of morbidity, mortality and crime rates. Various studies also show that drug abuse is more common across developing and developed countries.

Increased/ uncontrolled drug intake led to psychopathology and made the patient more prone to other mental disorders. There was a negative interaction found between substance use and exploration-exploitation behaviour as opposed to EBR-eye blink rate. Individuals with regular substance use and low EBR had increased exploitative behaviour in comparison to those with high eye blink rate.

Conclusion

According to the key findings we conclude that drug and other harmful substance are dangerous and depending on the amount consumed can lead to addictive behaviors in young adults. Young adults are more proved to more prone to substance abuse because of various factors like maladaptive schemas, childhood adversities, peer pressure, pre-natal exposure, family problems etc., Illicit drug usage can alter brain connections and can hamper decision-making processes in youths specially because their brain are still growing and developing. Drug usage can also lead to addiction, going from gentle, moderate or extreme. Drug use can be preventable if taken care. In the same way addiction to a specific substance can be controlled or lowered with help programs catering to reduce drug dependence involving families, school, peers and networks.

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