

# Influence of Environmental Factors on Substance Abuse

Earika Chib

LL.M. Student (2022), Department Of Legal Studies, Central University Of Punjab, Guddha, Bathinda.

## Abstract:

Substance addiction has become a global issue and one of the top causes of death. Every year, the global widespread of addiction and drug abuse causes millions of fatalities and new cases of substance use disorders. In recent years, India has seen an increase in drug addiction. In India, alcohol is the most often used substance, followed by cannabis and opioids. Other effects of drug misuse in the family include an economic burden, a disrupted family atmosphere, aggression, and psychological difficulties. There are numerous potential environmental elements that can lead to addiction. This paper makes an attempt to comprehend the elements that contribute to substance misuse.

**Keywords:** Drug addiction, Substance Abuse, Substance Use Disorders, co-dependence, Alcohol, Cannabis, Opiates.

## INTRODUCTION

Drugs broadly include various types of substances under their ambit. Alcohol, cannabis, opium, poppy husk, tobacco, and heroin are the major drugs misused in India. Buprenorphine, propoxyphene, and heroin are the most commonly used injected drugs. Addiction is more than just obsessive drug use, as it can have long-term repercussions. Drug addiction is defined as the obsessive use of psychoactive drugs to the point where the user has no viable alternative except to continue using.<sup>1</sup> There are two components to drug addiction. Physical and psychological dependence

Physical reliance arises when a substance is used consistently and the body becomes acclimated to its effects. The individual then continues to consume the drug in order to feel normal, as its absence will cause withdrawal symptoms.

Psychological dependency occurs when a drug has been used habitually and the mind has become emotionally reliant on its effects, either to elicit pleasure or believe the pain.<sup>2</sup> The mind then does not feel capable of functioning without it. Drug addiction or habitual use of any chemical substance alters the state of body or mind for other than medical purposes.<sup>3</sup>

Drug misuse can result in a wide range of dysfunctional behaviours that disrupt normal functioning in the family, career, and community. Drug addiction is a lifestyle disorder that has recently paced evolving into

<sup>1</sup> Environmental Factors and their Role in Addiction, available at: <https://www.tpoftampa.com/environmental-factors-and-their-role-in-addiction/#:~:text=A%20per%20so%20n's%20environment%20can%20include,potential%20of%20abuse%20and%20addiction> (last visited on June 19, 2022).

<sup>2</sup> What are the different types of drugs?, available at: <https://www.therecoveryvillage.com/drug-addiction/types-of-drugs/> (last visited on June 19, 2022).

<sup>3</sup> The 6 Types of Drugs and their Effects, available at: <https://itspsychology.com/types-of-drugs/> (last visited on June 29, 2022).

a global, social, and public health issue. No country is immune to the heinous repercussions of drug usage. Family and social values have been destroyed to unprecedented degrees. Treatment is difficult because substance abuse and addiction have so many facets and disturb so many elements of the life of a person. Effective treatment programs often include a number of components, each of which are focused on a different aspect of the condition and its repercussions. The ultimate goal of drug addiction treatment is to help a person achieve long-term abstinence. But the immediate goals are to reduce drug misuse, enhance the capacity of the abuser to function, and limit medical and social consequences.

Addiction, being a chronic, recurring disorder, may necessitate numerous bouts of therapy before obtaining long-term abstinence.<sup>4</sup> So, a preferable measure is to prevent substance abuse than curing it in later phases. People of different ages, religious views, and socioeconomic backgrounds are affected by substance misuse. However, certain parts of society are more vulnerable to substance abuse and addiction. The environment, along with heredity, is a major risk factor for addiction and drug usage. There are several variables that comprise a drug-inducing environment in the life of a person. It can be very difficult to distinguish regions that cause negative reactions to this problem.

Understanding the causes of substance use is a vital part of effective treatment ways. Some Environmental Factors Influencing Substance Abuse and its disorders that put a person at risk of addiction are discussed in the paper. People who are addicted to drugs can recover and live productive lives if they receive therapy tailored to their specific requirements. The proper treatment for a person is determined by their nature and severity of difficulties and needs. Treatment is only possible when there is awareness about addiction in various terms. Some terms are causative factors, symptoms, vulnerability, treatment, available support networks for the process of substance de-addiction, treatment facilities, and so on.

As a result, raising awareness is a critical component of preventing drug usage. Substance misuse is a complicated phenomenon with several social, cultural, biological, geographical, historical, and economic dimensions. The processes of industrialization, urbanization, and migration have resulted in a relaxation of the old manner of social control. The growth and entrenchment of drug abuse need to be prevented. This needs extensive research on the causes driving the sober phase and post-addiction phase in drug use. This paper covers the initial environmental factors which introduce a person to drug use. An analysis of the promoting factors will also be covered.

## BACKGROUND ON GROWING DRUG ADDICTION IN INDIA.

Substance abuse is defined as using a drug for reasons other than medicinal in an amount, frequency, or manner that harms physical and mental functioning. Drug usage not only harms the physical and mental health but often leads to the death of an individual. It destroys the family and social ideals of society. In India, the most abused substances are alcohol, cannabis, heroin, poppy husk, tobacco, and opium. Also, due to their ease of availability and local cultivation, they are mostly employed for cultural and traditional purposes. However, there has been an increase in the abuse of prescription medicines such as ephedrine, morphine, proxyvon, diazepam, and codeine-based cough syrups.<sup>5</sup>

During the nineteenth century, an era of rapidly expanding prosperity, drug addiction became a major social problem in the country. As the twentieth century progressed, the use of synthetic medications

<sup>4</sup> Pradeep Gupta, "Drug Addiction : Current Trends and Management" 5(1) *The International Journal of Indian Psychology* (2017).

<sup>5</sup> Damir Ljubotina, *et.al.*, "Prevalence and Risk Factors of Substance use among urban Adolescents: Questionnaire Study" 45(1) *Croatian Medical Journal* (2004).

became more widespread. Artificial pharmaceuticals began to be developed and marketed to a wider range of users. Such availability and potency of chemicals have no evident limits. Drug abuse and addiction cause a slew of social, physical, and economic issues with catastrophic consequences. Every addict affects the life of a complete family. It is widely affecting people of all ages, social classes, and genders.

However, it is impossible to quantify the number of drug abusers or develop a comprehensive approach to dealing with the problem. It is due to the fact that a “hidden population” that does not seek treatment and thus goes unreported is involved in drug use. This makes assessing the problem, estimating costs (both social and economic), and designing intervention options challenging. The problem also includes that not all drugs are the same. As a result, the issues are distinct. Alcoholism and heroin addiction are not synonymous.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the drug problem is recognized as an attempt to describe the history, psychology, sociology, and economics of each and every kind of drug abuse.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To study the potential environmental factors behind drug- addiction.
2. To analyze the factors that influence the substance abuse problem.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher applied an analytical and descriptive research method to analyze and explain the causes and effects of the complex phenomenon of drug abuse. An interdisciplinary approach to describe and analyze the relationship between drug abuse and wider society is preferred. Mostly secondary sources like various books, journals, newspapers, research articles, research papers, reports, etc., are considered for this research.

## ANALYSIS OF THE INFLUENCING FACTORS BEHIND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

The term “environment” refers to the circumstances or conditions that surround a person. It is a pretty broad term frequently used to describe the immediate surroundings of a person, which normally consist of space including people and other things. But the notion of “environment” has been narrowed to understand the societal aspects concerning drug abuse.<sup>7</sup> The most common environmental factors that put someone at risk of addiction are described below.

1. Family History and household dynamics- People with a family history of substance misuse, mental health difficulties, or criminality are more likely to develop an addiction. When a person has closely watched a family member using narcotics since childhood, it might normalize the personal conduct of the individual towards drugs. The family domain can have a significant impact on developing substance misuse in the life of a person. Substance misuse, on the other hand, has significant, obvious repercussions on the other family members also.

The abusive behaviour like compelling and asking for money and other substance forcefully and frequently leads to weaker communication, lower empathy, and a general deterioration in household harmony. Furthermore, that families with favourable attitudes toward addictive substances or with a history of or current presence of violence, are far more likely to develop substance misuse problems. Since the development of alcoholism or drug addiction is commonly linked to the family domain,

<sup>6</sup> Sandhya T. Gadakh, “Drug Abuse in India- an analysis” 7(1) *International Research Journal of Management Sociological and Humanity* (2016).

<sup>7</sup> *Supra* Note 2.

addicted people are frequently advised to seek treatment at an inpatient or residential institution.<sup>8</sup> It distances them from home circumstances, which may have contributed to their addictions. Co-dependency difficulties are also widespread in the family units. It may lead to family members naively enabling greater substance use.

As a result, most addiction treatment programs incorporate and promote family counselling to identify any co-dependency and interlinkage of issues involved. People who come from violent or irresponsible families are more likely to acquire substance use and related disorders. This is because they are more prone to acquire maladaptive ways of stress coping during childhood, and making harmful or self-destructive behaviours more likely in adulthood.

Some hereditary features, such as extreme impulsiveness and sensation-seeking qualities, predispose a person to an addictive personality. In other cases, the individual may have just discovered substances to be a quick fix for a problem in their life.<sup>9</sup> Whatever the underlying cause, one can get sober with the help of a caring support network and medical care at an addiction treatment centre

2. Peer Pressure- The people one associates with have a large influence on their conduct. No matter how strong-willed an individual believes they may be, if they hang out with a friend circle or group that routinely abuses drugs or alcohol. They eventually Will fall for it. Not everyone succumbs to peer pressure, but most people seek to become friends with others who share similar interests. When the social connections of an individual largely rely on associating with people who exhibit potential alcohol or drug problems, it might be difficult to refrain from exhibiting similar problematic behaviours.

A strong factor in the maintenance of addiction is a sense of belonging and connection to like-minded people. This is one of the primary strategies that has influenced the substance usage of many people.<sup>10</sup>

As a result of social pressure, almost everybody in the group will undoubtedly adopt the habits and behaviour patterns of their friends. Individuals with more tolerant and less critical views of drug use are more likely to engage in drug usage. Such people who seek to dissociate themselves from such abusive peers, have higher rates of relapse.

3. Mental Health Disorders- While some mental health conditions are inherited, others are triggered or induced by the environment. Mental diseases such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) have a significant impact on how one interacts with their surroundings.<sup>11</sup> It leads some people to seek solace in substance misuse.
4. Trauma- Trauma is the result of an encounter that the brain is unable to absorb effectively, resulting in negative emotional repercussions. What traumatizes one person may not traumatize another, but examples include violence, accidents, grief, and other strong emotional occurrences.
5. School, college, and workplace- There is a lot to handle at school, from grades and big life decisions to social groups and developing relationships. As a way of escaping the pressure, some people become involved in the party scene.
6. Substance Use as a Young Adult- Using addictive substances as a young adult is one of the most obvious risk factors behind substance use disorders. Cigarettes, alcohol, or illegal drugs, get the brain

<sup>8</sup> Drug addiction : Causes and the way out, *available at*: <https://www.Merineews.com/catFull.jsp?article ID=15765264>. (last visited on June 19, 2022).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Hassan Lone, "Drug Addiction and awareness regarding its possible treatment and rehabilitation of young drug users in Kashmir" 8(4) *International NGO Journal* 83 (2013).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

into the habit of seeking and abusing substances from an early age. It makes a person far more likely to battle with addiction later in life also.

7. Film, TV, Celebrities, and media culture- As young people have such great access to celebrities and a diverse range of content on TV, in films, etc. They often get exposed to drug culture at an early age. Even adults can be influenced by the different tempting advertisements given by their favourite on-screen characters.

In general, media in other forms such as video games, movies, and television shows, have a grave impact on the behaviours of people. Advertisements and content on relationships, violence, sex, and other topics can influence young viewers to adopt self-critical and unhealthy lifestyles. Getting real-life impact of shows with substance abuse practicing content affects viewers with vastly different masculine values.<sup>12</sup> Any knowledge acquired from such reality shows and events might influence behaviour. This has been demonstrated for advertising and programmatic content also.

8. Social Media- People are under constant pressure to show their best selves on social media, which can have a substantial impact on their mental health. Some people may turn to drugs to cope with the anxiety caused by harmful internet use. While social media offers numerous social benefits, it also has many social drawbacks. When someone battling with emotional issues watches others having a good, cheerful, attractive time, it affects their inner self-worth. It can make them feel even more socially alienated, undermine their self-esteem, and worsen feelings of failure and shame.

There are mounting evidences that depict that increased social media use can exacerbate the mental health problems of people, who are already vulnerable. Even though several groups and influencers are emerging who are putting their flaws and challenges on display to combat stigma and shame. Such influencers are giving hope for unlikely changes in such trends in the near future.

9. Culture or religion- There are numerous cultural and religious factors for addiction, such as the geographical place in which one tends to grow up, religious beliefs prominent in some cultures, etc. Early experiences and teachings connected to guilt, and involvement in (or exclusion from) cultural or religious activities. Some societies tolerate male drinking but not female drinking, resulting in significantly different rates of alcohol abuse by gender.<sup>13</sup> The same is true for any other cultural standards that are powerful enough to influence behaviour, especially when they are broadly adopted and exposed. The frequent witnessing of bad behavior arises as a direct response to rebellion against such rules.

10. Learned Environments- For some people, the physical environment can become a trigger in and of itself and provide a slew of triggers for persons who are addicted. Actions such as drinking as soon as one gets home from work or hanging out in a club where a person and their friends have used drugs contribute a lot. It forms an interconnected link between drug abuse and such places. Any time one repeats these acts, they are prone to experience cravings.

Like from going to a pub for “after-work drinks” to sitting on the kitchen bench alone at home, to a specific social hangout, these places can relate to cravings.<sup>14</sup> When behaviours are repeated, they become conditioned to a specific location or scenario. Then these learned habits can be difficult to

<sup>12</sup> National Institute on Drug Abuse(NIDA), *available at:* <https://www.nih.gov/about-nih/what-we-do/nih-almanac/national-institute-drug-abuse-nida> (last visited on June 20, 2022).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), “*Principles of Drug Addiction Treatment-A Research-Based Guide: Third Edition* ( CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn., 2018)



escape. When both the physical location and the people in it are associated with alcohol or drug abuse, these triggers can be amplified

11. Society- Another key potential cause of drinking and drug addiction is the amount of contribution by a community domain to a person getting addicted. It is determined by the level of involvement that an individual has in his or her community. Furthermore, communities with limited substance misuse have little probability of promoting substance abuse.<sup>15</sup> But the reality is that very few communities are free of substance misuse.

People retaining community involvement are considerably more likely to embrace and act on positive attitudes, toward alcohol and drug usage in areas where those attitudes prevail. Stress is caused by stressful situations, which affect people and their behaviour. Furthermore, the norms and standards established in each community define what is normal and what is not normal. It results in the categorization of individuals as deviant (in this case, “addicts”).<sup>16</sup> Addiction is considerably produced and maintained by elements outside of the individual.

12. Protective Factors- Protective factors are contrary to risk factors and treatment programs that can assist addicted people and their loved ones in proper implementation and nurture. Having a socially acceptable perception of drug misuse is one example. Parents who are somewhere involved in the life of their children and teenagers are potentially less risk of abuse.

Parents who check friend groupings and attitudes also contribute to monitoring the social life of their children. Household and family members who set clear limits and have strong and good familial relationships can act consciously toward a person’s tendency towards drug abuse.<sup>17</sup> But broadly, anyone can engage in harmful alcohol or drug use.

## RESULTS

As a result, most addiction treatment programs incorporate and encourage family therapy, which identifies and addresses the co-dependency of contributing factors towards addiction. If some issues are linked to the substance abuse problem of a person in some manner. Then, those issues must be addressed for the recovering addict to have a chance of being sober. It should be no surprise that peers can also be a great negative influence. But to some extent peers can be just as important to the rehabilitation of an addict as they are to getting into an alcohol or drug issue. Sober peers and peers who support recovery can be seen encouraging and motivating in recovery.

Similarly, persons in recovery are urged to cultivate relationships with other recovering acquaintances as it connects them with people to whom they can relate. It also helps in offering and receiving counseling during times of need or uncertainty. While the peer domain is linked with the chosen social circle of a person. But the job or school domain provides circumstances that are bound to the environment of a person. A matter at work or school will naturally differ from that at home or among peers. Similarly, connections with co-workers or fellow students are typically far less intimate. The work domain sometimes may have little influence on the development of addiction. But, at times jobs in industries where substance misuse is more widespread play a significant role in addiction.

---

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> NIDA Info-Facts: Treatment Approaches for Drug Addiction, *available at:* [www.nida.nih.gov/infofacts/treatmeth.html](http://www.nida.nih.gov/infofacts/treatmeth.html) (last visited on June 20, 2022).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

Since school environments are more social and contain more concentrated demographics, the school domain of adolescents and college students might be much more relevant in causing addiction. It includes the stress created by a drop in performance, compelled participation, and resistance to the commitment demanded of a job or school. Parental impact, societal standards, media depiction, and learned physical associations are additional factors.<sup>18</sup> A community can be as beneficial to the recovery of a person, as it can be to addiction.

Recovering addicts who join recovery communities areas with a large concentration of recovering addiction are considerably more likely to stay sober than those who return to their secluded hometowns. It is critical to note that these variables are simply risk factors. They rarely account for all of the reasons why someone struggles with addiction. In reality, a variety of things contribute to the ultimate condition, but knowing about environmental triggers allows to take efforts for mitigating their effects. It also helps in having more control over the rehabilitation activities and future sober life of a person.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Substance misuse has become all too frequent in our society. Despite the abundance of information on the many negative consequences of alcohol and drugs, more people than ever before are experimenting with addictive substances. Although addiction has become a major issue and addiction information has substantially risen, people continue to use substances in dangerous ways. Figuring out the exact reason might be able to prevent the development of addiction and cure those who have become chemically dependent.

The main conclusion that can be drawn regarding substance abuse is to become aware of the various potential sources influencing a person into addiction. Need to take the appropriate precautions to avoid all mitigation factors behind drug abuse is there. The drug abuse problem is frequently growing as a fatal sickness. It is difficult to pinpoint a single environmental component that contributes to addiction. In reality, people are likely to develop addictions as a result of external stimuli. The main objective is to become aware of the various potential sources of influence on drug abuse. An approach to sort the appropriate actions to considerably control and reduce addictions while avoiding what is too dangerous.

## REFERENCES

1. National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), "Principles of Drug Addiction Treatment-A Research-Based Guide: Third Edition ( CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 3rd edn., 2018)
2. Damir Ljubotina, et.al., " Prevalence and Risk Factors of Substance use among urban Adolescents: Questionnaire Study" 45(1) Croatian Medical Journal (2004).
3. Hassan Lone, "Drug Addiction and awareness regarding its possible treatment and rehabilitation of young drug users in Kashmir" 8(4) International NGO Journal 83 (2013).
4. Pradeep Gupta, " Drug Addiction: Current Trends and Management" 5(1) The International Journal of Indian Psychology (2017).
5. Sandhya T. Gadakh, "Drug Abuse in India- an analysis" 7(1) International Research Journal of Management Sociological and Humanity (2016).
6. Drug addiction: Causes and the way out, available at: <https://www.Merineews.com/ca tFull.jsp?article ID=15765264>. (last visited on June 19, 2022).

---

<sup>18</sup> *Supra* Note 8.

7. Environmental Factors and their Role in Addiction, available at: <https://www.tponftampa.com/environmental-factors-and-their-role-in-addiction/#:~:text=A%20person's%20environment%20can%20include,potential%20for%20abuse%20and%20addiction> (last visited on June 19, 2022).
8. NIDA Info-Facts: Treatment Approaches for Drug Addiction, available at: [www.nida.nih.gov/infofacts/treatmeth.html](http://www.nida.nih.gov/infofacts/treatmeth.html) (last visited on June 20, 2022).
9. National Institute on Drug Abuse(NIDA), available at: <https://www.nih.gov/about-nih/what-we-do/nih-almanac/national-institute-drug-abuse-nida> (last visited on June 20, 2022).
10. NIDA Info-Facts: Treatment Approaches for Drug Addiction, available at: [www.nida.nih.gov/infofacts/treatmeth.html](http://www.nida.nih.gov/infofacts/treatmeth.html) (last visited on June 20, 2022).
11. National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), available at: <https://www.nih.gov/about-nih/what-we-do/nih-almanac/national-institute-drug-abuse-nida>(last visited on June 20, 2022).