

Socio-Demographic Profile Of Psychoactive Substance Users Attending a Centre For Mental Health, Rupandehi

Dhungana M¹, Thapa M², Thapa D³

1. Lecturer, Department of Psychiatry, Devdaha Medical College and Research Institute, Rupandehi, Nepal 2. Consultant Psychiatrist, Chautari Nepal Health Foundation, Rupandehi, Nepal 3. Program coordinator, De-addiction unit, Chautari Nepal Health Foundation, Rupandehi, Nepal

E-mail *Corresponding author : drdhungana3536@hotmail.com

Abstract

Introduction: Psychoactive substance use is known since the origin of mankind and has been global problem that is influenced by social, economic, political and psychosocial factors. The menace of psychoactive substance abuse is that it is not only a socially unacceptable reality but in itself a disorder and is emerging as a major public health burden.

Material And Method: A descriptive study was carried out with the view to find out the prevalence of psychoactive substance disorder in de-addiction unit at Centre for Mental Health (Chautari Nepal Health Foundation) in Rupandehi district of province-5, Nepal. All patients who were admitted during the study period with psychoactive substance use Disorder were interviewed by using semi structured performa for addiction. Total 387 patients with psychoactive substance dependence (according ICD-10) were enrolled in the study after providing written informed consent. The data was analyzed by using descriptive and inferential statistics with SPSS software version 16.

Results: Among 387 psychoactive substance users, majority of them (34.1%) were in the age group 35 years and above, 57.1% were belonged to Brahmin/ Chhetri ethnic group. Greater proportion 44.4% of psychoactive substance abuser had started taking the drugs between the age of 16-20 years of age. Alcohol was most commonly used psychoactive substance as 47.5% were dependent to alcohol.

Conclusion: Based on the study findings, it is concluded that addiction is a global burden. Youth is a vulnerable group. Therefore, special attention, Psycho education related to psychoactive substance should be started before adolescent.

Keywords: Socio-Demographic Profile, Psychoactive Substance, Nepal

INTRODUCTION

Psychoactive substances use has been the topic of discussion since the beginning of human record. Earlier some of the psychoactive substances were used with recreational and religious background. Alcohol was and is still offered in special occasion. In Hindu culture, even till date cannabis (bhang) has been approved during Shivaratri and Holi. In few countries, cannabis is legally approved for use. With time, psychoactive substances have produced more of harm than benefit. UNODC had press released a report in 2017 stating that

29.5 million people are globally suffering from psychoactive substances. Depressing part is that, young people are the targeted group.

Chautari Nepal Health Foundation is a centre for mental health located in Tilottama-11, Rupandehi, province-5. It has two units, psychiatric and de-addiction (detoxification and rehabilitation). Detoxification and Rehabilitation unit has been running since 2015-07-31. With the view of finding out the prevalence of psychoactive substance disorder in this locality, this study has been carried out.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

A descriptive study was carried out with the view to find out the prevalence of psychoactive substance disorder in de-addiction unit at Centre for Mental Health (Chautari Nepal Health Foundation) in Rupandehi district of province-5, Nepal. All patients who were admitted during the study period from 31st July, 2015 to 31st July, 2018 with psychoactive substance use Disorder were interviewed by using semi structured Performa for addiction. Total 387 patients with psychoactive substance dependence (according ICD-10) were enrolled in the study after providing written informed consent. The data was analyzed by using descriptive and inferential statistics with SPSS software version 16. Administrative and ethical approval was obtained from the concerned authorities prior to data collection.

RESULT

Out of 387 clients, 347 were male where as 40 clients were female. Adolescents and adults were the major groups indulged in psychoactive substance use. Two clients fell in age group 13-15. Among 387 clients 61.2% were married, 37.2% were unmarried. Minority group 0.5% and 1.03% were divorced and separated respectively. Majority of the clients 54.5% had qualified up to secondary level, 2.06% were illiterate, 29.9% achieved fundamental education and 13.4% clients had completed higher education. Psychoactive substances users 57.1% were more prevalent in Brahmin and Chhetri, 32.04% were Janajati, 4.9% were Dalit, 4.65% were others and 1.29% were Muslim.

Majority 44.4% clients had started between the age of 16-20 years. Others 23.7% were at the age of 26 and above years, 20.9% were at the age of 21-25 years and 10.8% were at the age between 13- 15. This data had been collected from clients as well as family members, the counselor of each client kept in touch with client and family members through telecommunication and home visits. It showed that 35.4% of the clients were under recovery. Above findings shows that among 387 clients 35.4% were recovered, relapse rate was 32.5%, 29.7% were out of touch, 1.5% death and 0.77% were in jail. About 17.05% clients had co morbid psychiatric illness. Among them majority had Psychotic disorder followed by mood disorder.

Among total clients, majority were admitted with the problem of alcohol consumption accounting for 48.32%. The data also showed that they belonged to middle and old age group. Among young population, the most preferable psychoactive substance 31% was opioid. Brown sugar is the most common opioid, 16.27% clients preferred cannabis, 2.32% preferred injectable use, 1.55% clients preferred tablets and 0.51% clients preferred volatile substance use.

Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristics Of the Patients

Characteristics	Frequency (%)	
Sex Distribution	Male	347 (89.6%)
	Female	40 (10.3%)
Age Profile	13-15	2 (0.5%)
	16-24	131 (33.8%)
	25-34	122 (31.5%)
	35 above	132 (34.1%)
Marital Status	Married	237 (61.2%)
	Unmarried	144 (37.2%)
	Divorced	2 (0.5%)
	Separated	4 (1.03%)
Education	Fundamental	116 (29.9%)
	Secondary	211 (54.5%)
	Higher	52 (13.4%)
	Illiterate	8 (2.06%)
Ethical Status	Brahmin/Chhetri	221 (57.1%)
	Janajati	124 (32.04%)
	Dalit	19 (4.9%)
	Muslim	5 (1.29%)
	Others	18 (4.65%)
Age of initiation of Substance	13-15	42 (10.8%)
	16-20	172 (44.4%)
	21-25	81 (20.9%)
	26 and above	92 (23.7%)
After treatment status	Recovery	137 (35.4%)
	Relapse	126 (32.5%)
	Out Of Touch	115 (29.7%)
	Jail	3 (0.77%)
	Death	6 (1.5%)
Preferred Substance	Alcohol	187 (48.32%)
	Opioid	120 (31%)
	Cannabis	63 (16.27%)
	Injectable	9 (2.32%)
	Tablets	6 (1.55%)
	Volatile	2 (0.51%)

DISCUSSION:

Majority were male users. Almost all the users admitted were young adults and above. The ratio of married to unmarried was almost double so also the ratio of Brahmin to Janajati. The age of initiation was in adolescent period. The preferred psychoactive substance was alcohol followed by opioid. Though majority of the users had behavioral problem due to psychoactive substance, the results cannot negate the co morbid psychiatric illness. Easy availability and affordability of psychoactive substances has been the point of attraction for the adolescents in this region of Nepal. Peer pressure, curiosity and entertainment among others have been reasons of use in this group of population.

Regarding the gender indulging in psychoactive substance use, male population has outnumbered the female group in our study, which is consistent with other studies. A study conducted by Mishra A and et al also showed that male to female ratio being high in other part of Nepal.¹ This table shows that males have nearly double the rates of both alcohol and drug use disorders than females, a finding that is highly consistent across studies. Kathleen R M et. al finding on epidemiology of substance use disorder also suggested that males have nearly double the rates of both alcohol and drug use disorders than females.²

Psychiatric disorder and psychoactive substance use disorder have been connected to each other. There is high prevalence of substance abuse in psychiatric patient and vice versa. Marriage has been considered one of the protective factors in preventing and psychiatric illness

Marital status has been one of the significant socio demographic risk factors for substance abuse. Study conducted in a psychiatric outpatient in Nigeria depicted that psychoactive substance abuse was more in married people.³ Our study also had a similar finding with more than half of the total population being married. A study conducted in a psychiatric hospital of Nepal also showed the consistent result.¹ Though people who are single fall in high risk group for mental illness, in contrast, married people are at risk for substance abuse.

More than half of the psychoactive substance users have qualification up to secondary level.

Khuwaja *et al* ⁴ quoted that formal schooling up to 12 years has been one of the significant risk factors for psychoactive substance abuse. School is a place where students make new friends and this is the place from where they learn to experiment their curiosity regarding psychoactive substances.

Nepal is a country with many ethnic groups. Some of the psychoactive substances esp alcohol is still restrained in some of the ethnic groups. Despite the boundaries, the data shows that prevalence of psychoactive substance is more in Brahmin and Chhetri. Studies conducted elsewhere in Nepal have also shown similar finding.^{1,5} This finding may give a hint that the trend is gradually dissolving.

The prevalence of age of initiation of psychoactive substance use seems similar worldwide. Adolescent and young age groups are the vulnerable and targeted groups. Peer pressure, curiosity, thrill seeking behavior, way of coping with negative emotion and show off are some of the reasons why this group indulge in psychoactive substances. In one of the studies conducted in western region of Nepal, more than 50% of drug users started using drugs before the age of 20.⁶ Merikangas et. al research on epidemiology of substance use disorder also reveal that the peak period of prevalence of both alcohol and illicit drug use disorders occurs in late adolescence and early adulthood.²

It is said and proved that psychoactive substance use disorder and psychiatric disorder are interlinked. Prevalence of psychoactive substance use is high among psychiatric patients and vice versa. A study conducted by [Anne-Marit Langås](#) et al about epidemiological studies from different countries, have shown a high prevalence of co morbid alcohol or other drug disorders and mental disorders.⁷ We excluded the behaviors such as psychotic experiences, irritability, verbally abusive and physically assaultive during active and withdrawal period. Those with co morbid psychiatric disorder were categorized in separate heading. They were not further sub categorized into individual entity. Among them majority were clients with psychotic disorder.

About choice of psychoactive substances, almost half had preference on alcohol followed by

opioid and then cannabis. In a study performed in youth of Rwanda, had similar finding.⁸ Our data also showed that opioid and cannabis were choice of psychoactive substance in younger population whereas older clients were more in to alcohol. Many studies are also in favor of this finding.

CONCLUSION:

Based on the study findings, it is concluded that psychoactive substance abuse is an overall challenge globally for health and legal issues. Mostly youths are the vulnerable and targeted group for addiction. Mode of psychoactive substance use has changed over the period of time from intravenous drug abuse to oral opiates. Age, marital status, education and co morbid psychiatric illness are some of the risk factors for the abuse. Awareness programs, early diagnosis and intervention can prevent an individual from developing addiction to psychoactive substances. It is also responsibility of the counselor to encourage the admitted clients for narcotic anonymous meetings held in local community to prevent relapses. The study was primarily based on a treatment seeking population, which is possibly different from community where substance use is still not thought to be disease, but only a social or legal issue.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST: None

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