
DRUG ADDICTION IN ANANTNAG : ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

The use of illicit drugs has become a major public health issue in the Anantnag district of India's Jammu and Kashmir state. This study aims to identify the causes of this issue and the various factors that contribute to its rise. Among the other factors that have contributed to the rise of addiction cases are the availability of drugs and the unemployment rate in the region. This article explores the socioeconomic impacts of illicit drugs on different groups, such as families, communities, and the public health system. It also looks into the various challenges that confront the fight against addiction, such as the lack of resources and awareness, as well as social stigma and the establishment of inadequate treatment facilities. The rising number of drug abuse cases in Anantnag has highlighted the need for a comprehensive approach to address the issue. This study aims to identify the various factors that contribute to the development of this problem and the implementation of effective rehabilitation programs. The study seeks to provide a sociological analysis of the problem of drug addiction in Anantnag, and it offers recommendations on ways to address its impacts.

Keywords: Drug Addiction, Anantnag, Socio-economic impact, preventive measures, health

INTRODUCTION

Drug addiction is a growing concern worldwide, and its impact is particularly pronounced in regions grappling with socio-political and economic challenges. In India, the district of Anantnag in Jammu and Kashmir has witnessed a concerning rise in substance abuse, especially among the youth. This issue has emerged as a significant public health and social problem, threatening the fabric of the local community.

The cultural and natural beauty of Anantnag, which is known for its abundance of natural and cultural activities, is at risk due to the rise of drug abuse and the lack of opportunities for young people. This issue is also contributing to the increasing crime rate and the disruption of family dynamics.

Despite efforts by governmental and non-governmental organizations to curb this menace, several challenges persist. These include inadequate rehabilitation facilities, limited awareness about the dangers of drug abuse, and the deep-rooted stigma associated with addiction. Furthermore, the lack of a cohesive community-based approach has hindered effective prevention and recovery strategies.

This research paper seeks to explore the multifaceted dimensions of drug addiction in Anantnag, examining its causes, impacts, and the challenges in addressing this issue. By understanding the socio-economic and cultural factors contributing to this crisis, the study aims to provide actionable insights and recommendations for tackling drug addiction and fostering a healthier, more resilient community.

The effects of repeated drug abuse can trigger a change in the brain's tolerance. This occurs when an individual requires a higher dosage of illicit substances to experience the same state of relaxation or pleasure that they previously achieved with lower doses. A substance abuse problem can have a significant impact on a person's behavior and cognitive skills. It can also permanently damage a person's abilities depending on the dosage. According to experts, certain changes can disappear immediately following an addiction, while others remain permanent.

Apart from impairing one's brain, substance abuse also poses various health risks. For instance, inhaling drugs can cause a disturbance in the heart's rhythm, and people who use illicit substances are more prone to acquiring HIV as they are more likely to use contaminated needles. Moreover, those who use illicit drugs are more prone to acquiring hepatitis C and B.

Drug addiction in Anantnag, a district in Jammu and Kashmir, has escalated into a critical public health and social issue, particularly affecting the youth. According to a study conducted in 2020, around 17,000 individuals in Anantnag and Srinagar are known to be heroin users. They reportedly spend about 3.7 crore a day on illicit substances.

The surge in substance abuse is attributed to factors such as unemployment, political instability, and easy access to drugs. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated the situation, leading to increased drug abuse in the region.

The government has initiated measures to combat this crisis, including the establishment of de-addiction centers and awareness programs. For instance, in November 2024, Anantnag police launched a major crackdown against drug trade, arresting several drug peddlers and attaching properties worth crores under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

However, challenges persist, including inadequate rehabilitation facilities, social stigma, and a lack of awareness about available de-addiction services. According to a study, over 90% of drug abusers are not aware of the process involved in de-

addiction. Also, only 8% of them knew about the establishment of a center in Srinagar.

Addressing drug addiction in Anantnag requires a comprehensive approach involving enhanced law enforcement, community participation, and the expansion of rehabilitation and awareness programs to effectively tackle the underlying issues contributing to substance abuse.

DRUG ADDICTION IN ANANTNAG

Drug addiction has emerged as a severe social and public health crisis in Anantnag, a district in Jammu and Kashmir. This region, once celebrated for its natural beauty and cultural heritage, is now grappling with a rapidly growing substance abuse problem, particularly among its youth.

PREVALENCE AND SCOPE

According to recent studies, Anantnag has become one of the hotspots for drug addiction in the Kashmir Valley. Reports indicate that thousands of individuals in the district are engaged in substance abuse, with heroin being the most commonly abused drug. According to a study conducted by IMHANS in Srinagar, about 17,000 individuals in the Anantnag and nearby areas are addicts of heroin, which they reportedly spend around 3.7 crore on drugs daily.

Primary Substances Abused

Heroin:

Accounts for the majority of substance abuse cases.

Prescription Drugs:

Opioids, painkillers, and sedatives are widely misused.

Cannabis:

Locally grown and consumed, it acts as a gateway drug for many users.

CAUSES OF DRUG ADDICTION IN ANANTNAG

1. Unemployment and Economic Challenges:

Limited job opportunities and economic instability have driven many youth toward drug abuse.

2. Political Instability:

Decades of conflict and violence in the region have created a sense of despair, making the youth more vulnerable to substance abuse.

3. Easy Availability of Drugs:

The porous borders and lack of strict enforcement enable the easy flow of drugs into the region.

4. Peer Pressure and Social Influence:

Many young people begin using drugs due to peer pressure or to seek an escape from their struggles.

5. Mental Health Issues:

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety, fueled by the region's instability, contribute to substance abuse.

IMPACT OF DRUG ADDICTION

1. Health Consequences:

- * Increased cases of infectious diseases (HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C) due to needle sharing.
- * Mental health disorders, including depression and psychosis.

2. Family and Social Disruption:

- * Strain on family relationships, financial burden, and domestic violence.
- * Social stigma and marginalization of addicted individuals.

3. Crime Rates:

- * Rise in thefts, burglaries, and violent crimes associated with drug trade and addiction.

4. Economic Costs:

- * **Loss of productivity and increasing burden on healthcare systems.**

CHALLENGES IN ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM

1. Inadequate Rehabilitation Facilities:

There are few de-addiction centers in the region, and those available lack resources and trained staff.

2. Social Stigma:

Addicted individuals often face discrimination, deterring them from seeking help.

3. Limited Awareness:

Most drug users and their families are unaware of available treatment options.

4. Weak Law Enforcement:

Despite periodic crackdowns, the drug trade continues due to loopholes in the system.

5. Political and Administrative Instability:

The lack of consistent policies hampers long-term solutions.

GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

1. De-Addiction Centers:

Several centers have been established in Anantnag, though their reach and impact remain limited.

2. Awareness Campaigns:

Government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are conducting awareness drives to educate the population about the dangers of substance abuse.

3. Police Crackdowns:

The police in Anantnag have been carrying out intensified operations against drug trafficking. They have seized various properties as part of their efforts.

4. Community Participation:

Local organizations and religious leaders are actively involved in spreading awareness and supporting recovery initiatives.

WAY FORWARD

1. Strengthening Rehabilitation Infrastructure:

Expand and equip de-addiction centers with modern facilities and trained professionals.

2. Comprehensive Awareness Programs:

Conduct targeted campaigns in schools, colleges, and rural areas to educate people about the dangers of drug abuse.

3. Employment Opportunities:

Address unemployment by creating skill development programs and job opportunities for youth.

4. Strict Law Enforcement:

Enhance monitoring and penalties for drug trafficking while strengthening border controls.

5. Mental Health Support:

Provide accessible mental health services to address underlying psychological issues contributing to substance abuse.

The drug addiction crisis in Anantnag demands immediate and coordinated efforts from all stakeholders, including the government, law enforcement agencies, community leaders, and healthcare providers. By addressing the root causes and implementing sustainable interventions, it is possible to reduce substance abuse and its devastating impact on individuals and society in the region.

DISCUSSION

There has been a rapid rise in the use of illicit drugs in Anantnag, which has put a strain on the local government and the people. One of the biggest challenges that the police and generals face is the illegal sale and trafficking of drugs in the area. According to reports, the cultivation of Opioid in Kashmir has increased significantly, making it more accessible to the people. In addition, other drugs are also available for purchase. The public can help the police in their efforts to combat this issue. One of the biggest issues that the government and various private organizations face is the lack of

facilities that are capable of rehabilitating the drug addicts. Also, the lack of awareness about the use and abuse of drugs among the youth is a major challenge. This is why it is important that the public and educational institutions are equipped with the necessary resources to address this issue. The caretakers and parents must be made aware of this issue so that they can spot it early enough to provide assistance. There is a vast amount of literature indicating that fostering a victim's social support and adopting certain positive behaviors can assist them in overcoming this problem. Being able to provide the necessary support and resources to drug addicts can help them overcome their issues and get back on track. They often feel isolated and lost due to their addiction.

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