**The Substance Abuse of Adolescents and Youth: The risk of Unintended Pregnancy and Mental Health Disorders**

**Biography**

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**Abstract**

The use of illicit or illegal drugs or alcohol is as “*Substance Use”* and the counter of drugs or alcohol for purposes other than those for which they are meant to be used, or in excessive amounts simply defined as “*Substance Abuse”.* Drug addiction became major public health and social problem in around the world. Mostly the offenders and victims of drug users are youth and adolescents of the country. Gender, ethnicity, and psychological disorders may lead to the biological factor and external environment can play a very crucial part in drug related behavior. Sexual harassments, previous experience with drugs, peer pressure is some of the external environmental factors which were caused to drug addictions. Substance Abuse can lead to contracting HIV/AIDS, unplanned pregnancy, and risk of suffering from Mental health disorders such as Depression, anxiety etc. This research is to analyses trends and patterns of Substance abuse of Adolescents and Youth and thereby determining the causes and effects to the young generation emphasizing the unplanned pregnancy and mental health disorders. This research takes up a qualitative approach and to that it gathers the secondary data that assess the youth suffering from mental disorders due to substance abuse and girls ended up in unintended pregnancy. This concludes while giving some parental tips and recommendations to the youth.

Key Words -Drug Addiction, Mental Disorders, Unplanned Pregnancy

**Introduction**

Commonly, drugs are categorized into two types as licit drugs and illicit drugs. Licit drugs are known as the legal drugs. Making, selling and using licit drugs is not prohibited. Alcohol, tobacco and caffeine are some examples of licit drugs in the market. Illicit drugs are prohibited, so it is illegal to make, sell or use them by anyone. Illicit drugs have been classified as illegal drugs because they are a threat to the health and life of the victims. Heroin, cocaine, LSD, ecstasy, methamphetamine, amphetamines and hallucinogens are some examples of these kinds of drugs. Illicit drugs are highly addictive in nature and pose serious risks to those who use them in all ways. Opium, Heroin and Cannabis became the illegal drugs famous in Sri Lanka. Cannabis and Heroin are very famous illegal drugs uses in Sri Lanka. India and Pakistan are the two main origin countries for drug trafficking. Opium, Heroin and Cannabis became the illegal drugs famous in Sri Lanka. However, Opium and Cannabis have been used in traditional Ayurvedic medical preparations and possibly also abused since ancient days in Sri Lanka. Written evidence of this abuse was found since the sixteenth century when Portuguese occupied the country, after 1980, with changes in socio economic policies and the north and east ethnic violence, drug smuggling increased.

Substance Use converted into Abuse and it became a major hazard among Adolescents and Youth. This has exacerbated during global pandemic of Covid-19 due to the severe lockdowns and school closures. Most of the students had to live inside but they suffered from depress and anxiety due to the long-term school closures and lockdowns. Especially the children had to learn via online learning and most of the time they had to sit in front of the devices, simply their screen time has skyrocketed. Not only that but also many of the children are at risk of expose to online sexual predators, online gaming zones and online Facebook parties. From those Facebook parties’ predators engage adolescents and youth for the online parties and they teach them about the substance use, the parents also haven’t got any chance to look after their children since they had to attend their meetings and work via online. Likewise, during this global pandemic many children were exposed to online predators and Facebook parties with substance use. Before this outbreak the youth and adolescents had to attend to the physical classes at school. Especially youth and adolescents suffering from many mental disorders and sexual transmitted diseases due to the substance use.

**The Behavior of Substance Abuse Adolescents and Youth**

Drug addiction became major public health around the world. Mostly the offenders and victims of drug users are youth of the country. There are two major factors that can contribute toward increasing the chance of drug addiction. They are inner motivation, which is biological factor and environmental factor. Gender, ethnicity and psychological disorders may lead to the biological factor and external environment can play a very crucial part in drug related behavior. Sexual harassments, previous experience with drugs, peer pressure are some of the external environmental factors which were caused to drug addictions. The diverse effects and consequences of drug addiction are vast and varied and affect people of all ages. There are no positive impacts brought on by this drug addiction other than for the drug dealers who earn their money. Drug addiction can affect a person’s health, physical fitness, psychological well-being, financial position, place in society, and finally have him charged with a criminal offence. Drug usage can also lead to contracting HIV/AIDS if contaminated hypodermic syringes are used for injecting the drugs.

This drug addiction damages the psychosocial well-being of the person. Depression, anxiety, memory loss, aggression, mood swings, paranoia and psychosis are characteristic emotional effects of substance addiction. A sense of hopelessness, loneliness, fear, guilt, shame and unhappiness are some other negative emotions felt by drug addicts. These social effects start with the abusers and their family members. It may tend to disrupt family relationships because drug abuse may trigger domestic violence and the ensuing problems are known to lead to divorce actions. Number of youth population of age between15 to 25 entering treatment for drug related problem has risen considerably by 166 % since 2010 to 2018. Injecting drug use is one of the methods of HIV/AIDS transmission. Sharing needles and injecting equipment with infected blood facilitate its spread. According to official reports up to 2006, the number of HIV positive cases was 838, which include 351 females.

**Risk of Unintended Pregnancy**

Unintended pregnancies are the most troubling public health issues among teenagers and adolescents. Regarding the World Health Organization (2005) approximately 210 million pregnancies occur each year worldwide of which 87 million are unplanned and 41 million continue to birth. According to the reports (2) the total number of unsafe abortion in 2008 was 21-22 million worldwide and there were 22 unsafe abortions per 1000 women aged 15-44 years. Mostly adolescents and teenagers are exposed to number of health issues around the world. They are more likely exposed to negative psychological and physical health issues because of Substance Abuse. Unplanned pregnancies are the serious issue mostly young women and girls faced and it ended up in depression, anxiety, suicide and other post traumatic disorders. Most of the young generation expose to Substance Use because of some family matters such as , divorce or separation of parents, neglect from their own family, family breakup, love affairs etc. Adolescents and Youth addicted to drugs , narcotics, alcohol, and other substances these days. As a result, the unplanned pregnancies of young girls and women have increased in that case Nursing homes, Family care centers are filled with single mothers with their children. Children’s homes are filled with orphans. Use of alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, and behaviors suggestive of alcohol abuse were popular among both young girls and boys. A range of school problems reflected in failure, poor performance, truancy, placement in a special class, early dropping out, and a lack of commitment to education--have been viewed as common antecedents to initiation, use, and abuse of drugs. Association with drug-using peers is perhaps the most strongly supported predictor of adolescent substance use. Teenagers may use drugs as a means of temporarily alleviating discomfort connected to life events which they perceive as being out of their control and can be seen as contributing significantly to an understanding of the higher incidence of drug use among low SES teenagers and those from disrupted families. Teenage pregnancy become and epidemic and teenagers who are in poor academic achievements sometimes may influence the onset of sexual activity and early parenthood in schools. As a result of substance use and ended up in unplanned pregnancy caused many physical ,mental and social problems. Most of the teenage girls and boys suffered from STD( sexually transmitted diseases) and HIV, Gonorrhea as major health issues. Apart from that those young girls faced many social impacts such as they were neglected from their peers in the school , suspended by the schools. Not allowed to their family etc. Girls under 16 are five times more likely to die during or immediately after pregnancy than women 20 to 24. Their infants have a higher incidence of toxemia, anemia, nutritional deficiencies, low birthweight, and retardation than infants of older women. Due to those social impacts most of them were chosen to suicide or ended up in the dementia centers or mental hospitals. Most of the teenagers engage in unprotected sex when they addict to narcotics and drugs. Also some teenage girls experienced many sexual assaults and sexual exploitation when the both parties use substances abusively. Therefore, the substance can be either use or abuse. The abuse of substance use may loss of our future leaders.

**Mental Health Disorders for Adolescents and Youth**

Peer pressure, self-esteem, friendship, love affairs are some of the reasons that children and youth suffered from mental health disorders. But Substance Abuse is the main reason that all young girls and boys addicted in deeply and ended up in those mental disorders. When teenagers are struggling from problems they quickly turned in to Alcohol or drugs to control their emotions or feelings. Especially Adolescents brain is still developing and they are not experienced in solving problems or handling emotional situations. In the short term, substance use can help alleviate unwanted mental health symptoms like hopelessness, anxiety, irritability and negative thoughts. But in the longer term it exacerbates them, and often ends in abuse or dependence. The effects of Substance use vary from Adult to Adolescents. Alcohol affects teens differently from adults. While adults tend to get more subdued and slowed down by alcohol, in adolescents it’s the opposite. Alcohol and drugs also affect the same brain regions that are at play in behavior disorders like ADHD and ODD. They tend to become more energetic, engage in more risky behavior and get more aggressive. The minds of teenagers and Adolescents are become more aggressive and uncontrolled when they tend to use marijuana, Cocaine, Alcohol etc. that caused many suicidal cases in the schools. Mostly Substance abuse and mental health disorders such as depression and anxiety are closely linked. Abusing substances such as marijuana or methamphetamine can cause prolonged psychotic reactions, while alcohol can make depression and anxiety symptoms worse. It’s important to know that substance use can have disrupted a young person’s life even if he is not technically dependent on the drug. This is especially true for youth with mental health disorders

**Tips for parents**

* Be involved in your child’s life.
* Give more attention on Children’s Friends
* Minimize a child’s stress at home.
* Learn the major risk factors for drug use among children.
* Show your love, care and affection to your children
* Parental support and strong family bonds
* Do not pressurize your child in education, but work with them as a team.
* Arrange friendly discussions with your child and give more priority on them

**Conclusion**

Depression, traumas, Anxiety, Sexual transmitted diseases, HIV is some of the mental disorders that teenagers and adolescents can be exposed and suffered in the modern society. Due to the Substance Abuse o teenage boys and girls unintended pregnancies and suicides are increasing and it exacerbated during the pandemic since of the stress lives. This is become an epidemic and Parents should be more aware and give love attention and care to their children since this substance use may destroy children’s lives. Take action to minimize their use of Substances and make every effort to keep our children safe from those health issues and threats encounter from substance abuse.

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