

**Journal of Social Sciences Research & Policy (JSSRP)****The Impact of Drug Abuse on Youth Criminal Behavior: Evidence from Young Prisoners in Punjab, Pakistan****Muhammad Haider Suhail<sup>1</sup>, Malik Kaleem Ullah<sup>2</sup>, Noman Farakh<sup>3</sup>, Zeeshan Meraj<sup>4</sup>**

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**Abstract:** *This research paper includes keen study of correlation between drug abuse and common criminal instincts among young prisoners in Punjab Pakistan mostly having age lying between 15-30 years. Through assembled and related questionnaires the data has been collected from 204 respondents using various data collecting techniques including quantitative, descriptive and correlational designs. Collected data depicts the high rate of drug use in beginning of adolescence. Various substances like opioids, cannabis and alcohol are included among the commonly abused drugs. Suspects have multiple arrest records and reportedly have involvement in both violent and nonviolent crimes. Pearson correlation analysis signifies strong direct relationship between drug use and criminal behavior of respondents. This deep observation highlights early factors which initiate and influence youth criminality, and shows how lack of education, social and economic vulnerability ignites the criminal behavior in youngster's. Moreover recommendations include education about preventive measures which should be taken along with early intervention, rehabilitation programs and effective policy reforms aimed mainly for reducing substance abuse and recidivism.*

**Introduction**

The most common and major social and criminal concern is likely to be drug abuse among youth which is recognized worldwide. Structured and well knitted research resulted in depicting a strong relationship between substance abuse and inclusion in criminal activities (Saladino et al., 2021; Sharma et al., 2016). Youngsters, who fell a prey to disadvantaged and unfair socio- economic environments, are more likely to be suspected as victims of both the problems drug abuse and criminal actions. In Pakistan finite and restricted research has been performed on incarcerated youth in order to scrutinize the reciprocity between drug abuse and criminal conducts. By understanding and evaluating the patterns of drug use, criminal behaviors and the correlation between these two very factors in order to reduce the effect of these foul activities among young prisoners in Punjab.

## Literature review

Researches in previous years concludes that initiation of drug abuse is directly in relationship with criminal conducts (Williams et al., 2021). Studies on criminal behavior depicted that common factors that exacerbate drug use and violent acts are socioeconomic vulnerability, low education levels and peer influence. (Saladino et al., 2021). Strategies like rehabilitation programs, counseling and community support have been identified as effective ways to reduce substance abuse and criminal behavior among youth offenders. (Williams et al., 2021; Sharma et al., 2016).

## Methodology

### Research design

Several types of designs are adopted in order to understand the relationship between drug abuse and criminal activity. Among these are quantitative, descriptive and correlational research designs.

### Sample

Subjects which were considered for research study included 204 male prisoners aged from 15-30 years selected specifically from correctional facilities.

### Instrument

Tool which is used to collect demographics data, indicators of drug abuse (type, frequency, duration, age at first use) criminal behavior (types of offenses, frequency, arrests) is a structured questionnaire.

### Data analysis

Descriptive analysis (frequencies, percentages, mean scores) concluded patterns of drug use and criminal conducts. Moreover, Pearson correlation was used to examine the relationship between the two.

### Ethical considerations

Data was collected ethically by ensuring strict confidentiality and with the consent of the subjects.

### Results:

#### Demographic profile

- All subjects were male percentage likely to be 100 (%)
- Most of them have age from 20- 30 years (86.8%)
- From urban areas (62.3%)
- Most of respondents had lack of education with 76.5% having no proper education. Their income is reported 30-60k PKR per month (71.6%)

#### Drug use patterns

Most of them were regular drug addicts starting in adolescence.

Common substances included opioids, cannabis, alcohol and multiple drugs (Saladino et al., 2021).

#### Criminal behavior

Subjects were involved both in violent (assault, fighting) and nonviolent (theft, burglary, drug related offenses) crimes. Multiple arrests and repeated offenses were reported depicting a cyclical pattern of drug use and criminal behavior.

#### Relationship between drug abuse and crime

Pearson correlation showed a strong positive relationship between drug use frequency and severity of criminal activities. Early drug initiation and socio demographic vulnerabilities were linked to increased criminal involvement (Williams et al., 2021; Saladino et al., 2021).

## Discussion

These results corroborate with existing literature laying stress on link between substance abuse and criminal activities. (Study on drug use and violent crime among adolescents, 1997; Williams et al., 2021).

Early initiation of drug was linked with more extreme criminal involvement, highlighting the importance of interventions targeting at risk youth before adolescence.

Repeated and frequent drug use and imprisonment highlights the core need for effective rehabilitation programs within correctional facilities. Demographic factors such as age, gender and education moderate the relationship between drug abuse and criminality showing the necessity of strategies to prevent high risks.

### **Conclusions**

Misuse of substances among young prisoners is non-preventive, often involving intoxicated substances and early initiation. Studies revealed a strong positive relationship between drug use and violent acts. Main factors contributing to these activities are limited education and unfair socio- economic impacts on youth. Comprehensive prevention, rehabilitation and support programs are important to break the cycle of drug abuse and criminality among youth.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Preventive education programs**

Implement awareness campaigns in schools and communities to raise awareness about the dangers of intoxicated substances among youth leading to prevention of criminal activity.

#### **Rehabilitation**

Introduction of counseling programs in prisons including awareness, rehabilitation programs vocational training and behavioral therapy must be done in order to reduce both.

#### **Early intervention strategies**

Target the youth which is at risk and more vulnerable to fell a prey to initial drug use and educate them about the dangers of drug abuse.

#### **Policy and legal measures**

Implementation of strict policies to control unchecked drug availability and rehabilitation participation rather than just verbal communication about them.

#### **Community engagement**

Train citizens and institutions of family and education to encourage involvement and monitor youth behavior and provide moral and emotional support.

#### **Future Research**

Frequent researches should be conducted to examine long term effects of drug abuse on criminal behavior and role of rehabilitation and recidivism.

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