

Locus of Control And Personality Traits Of Male Substance Abusers and Non Abusers

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Objective. The present study aimed to assess and compare personality traits and locus of control of substance abusers and male non-Abusers.

Design: Retrospective study.

Place and Duration of the Study: The male substance abusers were taken from two drug treatment centers of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, Nijiat Markaz and sunny trust Bahara Kahu, and 50 male non-abusers were taken from general community January 2004 to April 2004.

Subject and Method: The sample consisted of 100 males, 50 male Abusers and 50 males' non-abusers.

The abusers and non abusers were selected through non-probability, purposive sampling technique. Rotter's Internal-External Locus of Control Scale (1966) (Urdu Translation), 16 Personality Factor Test (16PF, 1949) (Urdu Translation) were used in study along with demographic sheet.

Results: The age range of male substance abusers and non-abusers was from 18 to 50 years, educated up to intermediate level. The age range of alcohol, opium and cannabis abusers was between 26 to 36 years, where as the heroin and poly drug-abuser ages were ranging between 37 to 50 years. Most of the substance abusers were using heroin and poly drugs. The results indicated that male substance abusers scored lower than non abusers on personality traits of Openness to change($t=7.360, P<0.01$), Self reliance($t=12.21, df=49, P<0.01$), Perfectionism($t=11.79, df=49, P<0.01$) and Tension ($t=16.4, df=49, P<0.01$).

Substance abusers significantly scored higher on external locus of control ($t=7.50, DF=49, P=.000$).

Conclusion: Substance abusers had accentuated specific personality traits which makes them different from non abusers. Moreover, substance abusers seem to be more influenced by environmental cues. Locus of control orientation is an important parameter which has effect on thought, behavior and actions.

KEY WORDS: Drug dependence, Personality traits, Locus of Control

INTRODUCTION

Over the ages drugs of all sorts have been used. Their variety, their number and their users have been constantly increasing. The increasing population of drug-dependent persons is a source of increasing concern for Pakistan. The present estimation of number of drug dependent person in Pakistan is approximately four million¹.

. Substance abuse represents one or of the many possible mal-adjustable ways in which an individual may react to stresses internal or external that are too severe for him to handle in normal adjustable way.

The personality related to substance abuse has received considerable attention over the past decade². Many researchers believe there is no evidence for a unitary "addictive personality"^{2,3}. Exemplary study of 101 young adults tracked from preschool to 18 years of age would seem to suggest otherwise. They sorted abstainer, experimenters, and abusers in to distinct diagnostic categories and concluded that the latter "were maladjusted, showing a distinct personality syndrome marked by interpersonal alienation, poor impulse control, and manifest emotional distress". Some argue that there are very few personality precursors, with the most prominent being unconventionality or nonconformity with adult societal expectations⁴. Others posit characteristics such as sensation seeking, depressed mood, and low self-esteem⁵. Many believes that personality determinants vary with the type of drug abused and the gender of the abuser; for example, personality correlates suggested for marijuana use include rebelliousness, nontraditional values, de-emphasis on achievement, and self-centeredness, while those for other drugs include distancing and distrustfulness for females, and aggressiveness for males.

A number of different theories of drug use have suggested that drug users can be distinguished from non-users on a number of different personality traits or characteristics, such as interpersonal aggression, to seek more affiliation to drug using peers, emotional immaturity, more group dependence and unconventionality, The feeling of isolation of an individual, over dependency, poor control of emotions and distress ambivalence towards authority, low frustration, tolerance and low self-esteem are also considered important. Baumrind (1990) concludes that any role played by personality characteristics is overshadowed by the family variables. Personality traits often thought to accompany alcoholism include impulsiveness, narcissism, dependence, anxiety and ambivalence². Labouvie & McGee in 1986 selected samples of alcoholics or drug abusers and tried to identify characteristics of a "substance abuse personality" by comparing these individual to non abusers. Results suggested that men who develop substance-abuse (alcohol) were antisocial, impulsive and depressive than other people⁶. A study showed that some specific adolescent personality factors significantly associated with marijuana use, heroin use, alcohol use and substance dependent are as more tolerance of deviance, less ego integration, more rebellious, less responsibility,

more impulsivity, less school achievement, interpersonal aggression, tension, group dependent, suspicious and inability to express emotions etc ⁷.

Cognitive variables such as self-reported motivations or reasons for substance use have important intervention implications given their high correlations with actual substance use and the fact that they may differentiate type of substance used, frequency of use, age of user, and stage of use (initiation vs maintenance) ⁴. Some studies showed that some specific adolescent personality factors significantly associated with marijuana use, heroin use, alcohol use and substance dependent are as more tolerance of deviance, less ego integration, more rebellious, less responsibility, more impulsivity, less school achievement, interpersonal aggression, tension, group dependent, suspicious and inability to express emotions etc ^{4,5,7}.

Different personality deficiency theories showed that substance abusers have specific personality traits which differ them from normal individual. Chein (1965) notes that in the bulk of his sample there was evidence of deep-rooted personality disturbance prior to the initiation of the drug use. Typically, addicts come from families characterized by an absence of maturity of affection and reciprocity of respect. The family disorganization and socioeconomic squalor contribution to generally unwholesome development environment for the growing child. The father of men addicts often sets a poor role model and the parents employ inconsistent standards for rewards and punishment. The personality deficiency of the potential addict include, Psychological depression, strong sense of futility, weak ego, impaired functioning of super ego, expectation of the failure, early formed and profound distrust of others, exceptionally low panic and frustration threshold and sex role confusion ^{4,8}.

Spotts & Shontz (1991) compared the sixteen personality factor questionnaire (16PF) scores of 9 (22-42yr old) nondrug-using males with those of 45 (21-52yr old) male heavy users of cocaine, amphetamine, opiates, barbiturate/sedative hypnotics, stimulants, depressants and combined drugs. 16PF performance of both these groups was compared with 19 groups described in meta-analysis of 16PF research. The 45 substance abusers were examined multimodally and longitudinally over a period of 4-5 months with extensive life history and drug use interviews and a comprehensive battery of dimensional and morphogenic assessment procedures. No significant differences were found among drug user groups, but nonusers differed significantly from all the drug user groups ⁹.

Recent reviews of locus of control literature (Lefcourt, 1976 & Phares, 1976) generally support the hypothesized relationship between locus of control and personal adjustment. An external orientation has been related to anxiety, depression, neuroticism, substance abuse and similar characteristics. Locus of control and mental well-being are interrelated. Someone with an internal locus of control will be able to face the stressor with a perspective that does not lay the outcome of the stressor on to him or her as a person. Externals may be more likely to abuse substances such as alcohol and heroin. Some researches have found no relationship between locus of control and parental alcoholism, a result contrary to the intuitions that children of alcoholics have external locus of control (Churchil, Broida, & Nicholason, 1990). Such as refusal to take responsibility indicates an external locus of control. It is this author's opinion that if persons with substance abuse problems are taught to develop control over their cravings then the symptoms would become more manageable. In this context, the ideal are those therapeutic interventions with the capacity to shift the provision of relief from external sources such as dependence on drugs, groups or drugs to internal sources such as one's control ^{10,11,12}.

SUBJECTS AND METHODS

The present research is a comparative study aims at assessing personality traits and locus of control of male substance abusers and male non-abusers. In present study 100 male participants were taken, 50 diagnosed male substance abusers, diagnosed by the consultant psychiatrists in the drug treatment centers, Nijiat Markaz and Sunny Trust Bahara Kahu. And 50 male non-abusers were taken for comparative use. Non-abusers were taken from general community. They were selected through non-probability, purposive sampling technique. Substance abusers and non-abusers were selected with the age range of 18-50 and were educated up to 7th grade. Two Psychological instruments were used in the study along with demographic sheet.

- Rotter's Internal-External Locus of Control Scale (1966) (Urdu Translation) ⁽¹³⁾.
- 16 Personality Factor Test (16PF, 1949) (Urdu Translation) ¹⁴.

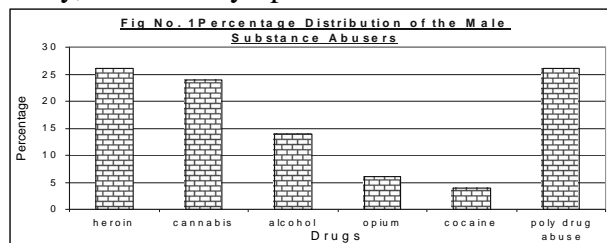
RESULTS

Table I shows that most of substance abusers lie within the age range of 37-50. frequencies show that most of alcohol, opium and cannabis abusers lie within the age range of 26-36. Most of heroin and poly-drug abusers lie within the range of 37-50 and equal number of cocaine abusers lie with in the range of 18-25 and 37-50. Results shows that most of them are heroin and poly-drug abusers.

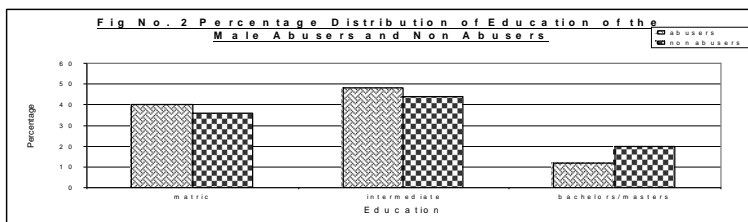
Table I. Percentage distribution of male substance abusers and male non-abusers by current age

Age Ranges	Substance- abusers		Non-abusers	
	frequencies	%	frequencies	%
18-25	9	18	11	22
26-36	19	38	18	36
37-50	22	44	21	42

Figure I depict different subsistence abused by the drug abusers. It is evident that heroin and cannabis were the most commonly used drugs (26% and 24 % respectively, followed by opium and Cocain.



As depicted by figure No.2 majority of the subjects head education level ranging from matric to intermediate.



About sixty percent of sample in both groups were married while the rest were single as shown by figure No.3.

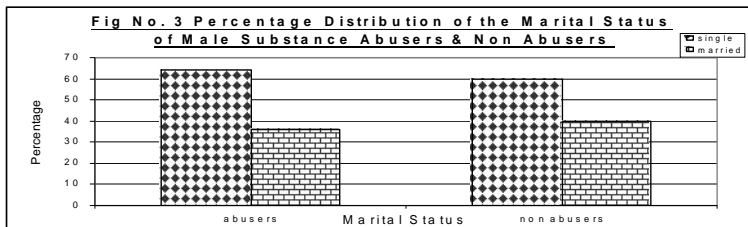


Table II: source of substance abusers and non abusers on ky variable of 16 personality factor questionnaire

Variable	Group	X	S.D	T	df	p
Openness to change	Sub- abusers	8.82	1.57	7.36	49	0.05
Openness to change	Non-abusers	10.94	2.30			
Self-reliance	Sub- abusers	5.94	1.44	12.81	49	0.05
Self-reliance	Non abusers	9.24	1.90			
Perfectionism	Sub- abusers	10.38	1.24	11.79	49	0.05
Perfectionism	Non- Abusers	13.44	1.65			
Tension	Sub-abusers	16.58	2.89	16.04	49	0.000
Tension	Non abusers	8.7400	1.70			

Table III: scores of male substance abusers and male non-abusers on external locus of control of Ratter's Internal-External locus of control

Variable	Groups	X	S.D	t	df	p
Ex- Locus of control	Sub- abusers	18.38	5.68	7.50	49	.000
Ex-Locus of control	Non-abusers	10.80	6.06			

The results in table 4 shows that on tension (Q4) male substance abusers scored higher mean (16.58) than the non-abusers group (8.74). t-values shows that this difference is highly significant ($t = 16.04$, $p < .001$).

Table 5 shows that male substance abusers scored higher mean (18.38) than the non-abusers group (10.80). t-values shows that this difference is highly significant ($t = 7.50$, $p < .001$).

DISCUSSION

Various empirical studies reveal that some pathological problems, inadequate personality traits, personal and social problems are linked with drug abuse. Many studies have emphasized on personality disorder of drug abusers. Inadequate personality and character disorder play an important role in drug abuse. Previous researches showed that drug abusers had a personality that was marked by poor impulse control, interpersonal alienation and emotional distress. A personality characterized by difficulties with interpersonal relationships, poor impulse control and subjective distress appears to be associated with frequent drug use⁴. The present study has shown that male substance abusers significantly scored lower than male non abusers on personality traits of Openness to change, Self reliance and Perfectionism. These findings seem to be in agreement with those reported in Western literature^{5,14}. Moreover, the association of lower scores on these personality traits with substance abuse is easily understandable, those who become dependent would have the tendency to stick to “Tried and True” rule and oppose any change, resulting in continuation of a behavior once maladapted. Similarly low score on Self reliance is self explanatory, reflecting the common view that persons with low self reliance would depend on others and easily amenable to peer pressure. Therefore such persons can easily indulge in group activities like substance use. Trait of Perfectionism also seems to play role in substance abuse because of the fact that people with low perfectionism would have little regard for social demands.

The present study also confirms the finding that male substance abusers have scored significantly higher on Tension trait. This has already been reported in previous studies and can be easily understood in the context that substance abuse is a maladapted behavior in reaction to overcome tension^{4,7}. This study showed that when substance abusers were compared with non abusers for locus of control, abusers scored significantly higher on external locus of control. It also confirms previous literature findings. As externals are more influenced by other’s opinions and environmental cues, tend to blame outside circumstances for their mistakes and refuse to take responsibility, therefore, they are more likely to abuse substances^{12, 13, 15, 16}

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