

# **Menace of Drug abuse in Punjab**

## **An Opinion Survey**

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Man has been using alcohol, drugs and other narcotics from times immemorial. But it is assuming alarming proportions of late, especially in Punjab. The consumption of both authorised and unauthorised liquor as well as drugs has shown marked increase over time in Punjab. The revenue collection under State excise has gone up from Rs 23 crores in 1970-71 to about Rs 1200 crores in 1998-99.

So, an opinion survey on drug addiction was conducted in Punjab with the objectives of examining the intensity/extent of drug users in Punjab; its effects on the family, the individual user and the society as a whole, and the perceived suggestions given by the respondents to ameliorate the problem of drug abuse in Punjab.

For collecting data, an interview schedule was developed and the respondents were the adult females who came to attend the Annual "Farmers Fair" (*Kisan Mela*) organised by the Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana in March, 2000. A total of 289 randomly selected rural women respondents belonging to 15 districts of Punjab could thus be personally interviewed to express their opinion on the specified objectives of the present investigation. The response was obtained from women because of higher possibilities of getting reliable information.

### **Results and Discussion**

The collected data were compiled and tabulated for the purpose of its analysis. It has been interpreted as per the following sections.

#### **Extent of Drug Abuse**

The data were gathered on the percentage of people addicted in the villages to which they belonged. Table 1 shows that about half of the respondents were of the opinion that fifty percent, or more, of male adult inhabitants in their native villages were addicted to one or more than one type of drugs. Indeed about three fourth of the rural male adults were reported to be habitual of taking drugs in 22.83% of villages. Only 12.79% respondents stated the drug use as less than 30% in their villages. No specified response was, however, received from 21.35% respondents. Therefore, apparently there is high intensity of drug use in Punjab.

Within the families of respondents, as many as 44.29% were their husbands, 26.64% had sons using drugs. The brothers of husbands accounted for drug users in case of 44.63% families.

### **Table 1: Percentage of males addicted in your village?**

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage

The drug users were the male members of the family like the respondents' husbands, sons or husband's brothers (Table 2).

### **Table 2: Who in your family uses drugs?**

Multiple response

It was, however, disgusting to note that 9.35 per cent of the respondents (Table 3) had opined women too using drugs in varying quantities. On the other hand, 48.44% replied in negative and 42.21% did not respond in any way to this question.

### **Table 3: Do women take drugs?**

#### **Types of drugs used:**

The drug addicts were using various drugs and narcotics, like alcohol, '*jarda*', poppy seeds, tobacco, '*sukha*,' '*bhukki*' and various other allopathic formulations in the form of capsules and tablets or even the cough syrups, injections, etc. (Table 4).

### **Table 4: Types of drugs consumed by the villagers of the respondents in Punjab**

The most common being liquor (expressed by 76.47 per cent of the respondents). The other less common drugs were '*jarda*' (35.39%), tobacco (28.03%), poppy husk (21.45%), allopathic tablets (20.41%), '*sukha*' (15.92%), '*bhukki*' and the capsules (14.87% each).

#### **Impact of Drug Addiction**

The effects of drug addiction on individual family have manifested themselves in household expenditure pattern, health hazard, indebtedness, forced disposal of landed property and other household possessions, etc.

### **Table 5: Expenses incurred by addicts on drugs**

The overall average expenditure on drugs per household was worked out to be Rs 734 per month. It is evident from Table 5 that out of 179 total drug users, 50.28 percent had spent less than Rs 500/- per month on various drugs. There were, however, 11.73 per cent of drug addicts who spent more than Rs. 3,000/- per month for the purpose. So, this is not a small amount by any standard and therefore, it thrusts downward pressure on the family's financial resources. Still further, drug addiction was considered as one of the very important factors of financial debt (19.37), physical ailments (17.30%), household conflict (65.05%), death of family members (15.22%) and selling of land due to paucity of family economic resources (Table 6).

Some of the other effects of drug addiction were also perceived by the respondents, such as divorce (7.61%) and induced habit of theft.

#### **Table 6: Effects of drug addiction on the family\***

##### **Impact on village as a whole**

The respondents were asked to express their opinions regarding the possible impact of drug addiction on the villager as a whole. (Table 7). A majority of the respondents (62.29%) were of the view that drug addiction led the people to litigation. Another 19.38 per cent expressed the extortionist activities be the outcome of drug addiction. There were, however, 8.30 per cent respondents who had opined that drug addiction did lead to crime and to the most heinous act of committing 'murder' under the influence of drugs. The situation becomes still more grim since a majority (52.95 per cent) had expressed fear that the drug addicts were unwilling to quit drugs (Table 9).

#### **Table 7: Effects of Drug Addiction on the village as a whole**

Although rectification is not possible, the problem of drug addiction can be improved with concerted efforts of the people, non governmental organizations (NGOs) and the state. So, the respondents were asked to give certain suggestions for the amelioration of the problem of drug addiction in the Punjab (Table 8).

#### **Table 8: Suggestions to prevent the use of drugs:**

Most of the respondents (49.13 per cent) were of the view that all the wine and liquor shops nearby villages to be closed. There were 13.49 per cent respondents who suggested that the legal provisions concerning drug addiction be strictly enforced in the right spirit. Opening of drug counselling centres, arranging village camps and providing most thrust by religious institutions were some of the other important suggestions made by the respondents.

In spite of the fact that drug abusers are mostly addicts, yet nearly one fourth of the respondents were of the view that with all possible measures suggested above, they can quite the habit (Table 9). As many as 52% respondents did not hope that an addict can quit while 21.79% gave no response. However, majority of the respondents were also unaware of any de-addiction centre being run in the State.

#### **Table 9: Do they want to quit drugs?**

**Looking at the intensity of the problem of rising drug addiction in rural Punjab, there is a strong need to check it through various measures and save the society from plunging into various health, social and economic disasters.**

Most of the social problems can be solved by increasing mutual understanding. Increase in integrative process of social interaction is the most important means of the solution of social problems. Of these, the most important are cooperation, accommodation, assimilation and

adjustment. Negatively, the disintegrative process of social interaction such as conflict, mal-adjustment, etc. should be removed. All this involves social education and social awakening.



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