

Psychological traumas resulting in substance abuse in women

Drug and substance abuse are becoming an escalating trend in the 21st century resulting in a global health insecurity. According to the World Drug Report 2021 by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the most used substances globally are denoted as nicotine, alcohol, cannabis, opioids, cocaine and amphetamines. National Institute on Drug Abuse US indicates that women respond to substances differently than men and may experience more cravings. This is due to the hormonal changes in women that makes them more sensitive to some substances than men. The United Nations Women further reports that 'one out of five drug users in treatment is a woman'. When displacing to the Sri Lankan backdrop, this social catastrophe manifests itself in societal profiles, but drug users, especially women, are not properly identified. They are entrenched as a subculture or a hidden group and are less likely to be addressed about. The socio-cultural dimension of the collapse plays a decisive role here. The number of reported drug abuse cases relating to women is very low relative to the reported cases of men, mostly due to social and cultural taboos.

Alcohol and cigarettes can be denoted as familiar substances where most of the young girls and women have been exposed, within their own household or their environments. However, it can be identified that most of the reasons for substance abuse are psychological. Women with physical or sexual abuse are twice more likely to engage in smoking, drinking or use of drugs. The main psychological grounds contributing in substance abuse can be distinguished as sex assault, domestic violence, childhood abuse or intimate partner violence (IPV). This is customarily visible in drug abusing women in Sri Lanka.

How psychological traumas lead to drugs

Psychological traumas tend to be the main incentive which manipulates Sri Lankan women into substance abuse. According to the Cascade Behavioral Health Hospital, after experiencing a terrifying or upsetting occurrence, one may suffer from psychological or emotional trauma, which can make it difficult to operate normally or cope with life's obstacles. Most of the reported cases intend to be an outcome of psychological traumas. According to Drug Facts 2016, both inner motivation as well as the environment becomes determinants for women to engage in the complication.

Domestic violence is one of the pivotal misfortunes encountered by drug addicted women. In Sri Lankan societies, girls and women are prone to get abused particularly by their father or husband. In other cases, it can be their legal guardian or a relative. Sexual violence has become a huge complication which often tends to happen towards young girls, sometimes beginning from their childhoods. IPV is another factor which contributes to foster psychological traumas in women. It should be understood that there is a higher probability for women to engage with substance abusing partners compared to men and a significant amount of women have been influenced by their significant other (National Dangerous Drug Control Board, 2019). As a result, many women tend to get exposed to substances where in some cases, the intimate partner encourages using substances and sometimes, trafficking or distribution mechanisms. Some of the women are forced into trafficking of drugs and substances as a result of poverty. There, they

also tend to use them and eventually gets addicted. Stress and depression can also be taken into validation, as drugs or substances have assisted in escaping from all the trauma, forebringing temporary comforts, resulting in addiction. Some of the case studies reveal that, some women get into drug or substance use due to the influence from their parents who are also using them.

By reviewing statistics by the National Dangerous Drug Control Board (NDDCB), it can be understood that nicotine or cigarettes and alcohol are the fundamental sources they tend to experience before setting out to any other drug. It is further revealed that 38% of women have started using drugs or substances due to a tragic experience, and 32% of women who use heroin, do it for the same reasons.

How it links to the national security of the country

Drug addiction has become a serious universal complication encountered by many nations. Addiction to drugs not only has become a health-related issue but also a social and national problem. Emergence of crimes as result of drug and substance abuse is no secret and therefore directly affects the national security specifying on the human security aspect. Individual security is at risk and serious prevention mechanisms must be implemented and executed.

When reviewing into reports and statistics, a significant connection between substances and commercial sex work can be identified. Most of the women who engage in the profession are subjected to regular substance consumption and some cases denoted that some women initiated substance abuse after they start as commercial sex workers. Commercial sex work thus has become the sole income and act as a supporting agent for the drug addicted women engaged in the profession to purchase drugs and substances. Various crimes associated around commercial sex work can further be identified. Sometimes these women tend to rob their customers and a very high risk of sexually transmitted disease (STD) is vividly visible. The possibilities of STDs can also take place through sharing equipment used for injecting substances. Here individual security is directly vulnerable to risk.

In other cases, they tend to engage in theft, burglary, pickpocketing, trafficking and other illegal activities. Ultimately these can lead to extreme cases like homicides as well as suicides. This denotes the danger that human security is rest upon with. In order for a country's national security to be ensured, human security aspect is a vital component to be defended. Therefore, protection of citizens from both traditional and nontraditional threats is the main objective or goal with individuals being the centralized subject. It is detectable that drug problem is causing ravages in the country hindering communities along.

Therefore, it is required to collect statistics regarding unreported cases as the unreported drug abusing cases are surpassed by the amount of reported cases. The necessity to conduct awareness programmes on national, district, regional as well as local authority levels in efficient manners is high. It is very clear that there are less information and statistics available regarding female use of drugs and the necessity to conduct more research is obligatory.

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