

Social Drift in Patients Suffering from Alcohol and Substance Related Disorders, Amman, Jordan

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BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The consequences of psychoactive substance misuse cannot be overlooked in any society. The devastating effects of such abuse on the bio-psycho-social and spiritual domains have consistently been demonstrated and documented. Historically, the ceremonial and spiritual use of various substances and drugs dates back thousands of years. Man has engaged in the use of all kinds of substances ranging from fermented milk, grapes and sugar canes to produce and consume mind altering substances. These effects have been ascribed to “abnormal” and supernatural phenomena and drugs themselves were widely believed to have medicinal, spiritual and /or religious underpinnings. This conceptualization continues to be with many of

us as we deal with the damaging effects of such substances and their lingering consequences.

In the Middle East, in general, and Jordanian society in particular, there is a paucity of scholarship in this area owing to a multitude of factors, among which is the relative recent emergence of such problems which have brought to the fore a myriad of associated social complications. The way authorities deal with these complexities can be partially explained by the deeply embedded societal attitudes in the Arabic culture toward addiction.

The shame and sense of guilt and the stigma that traditionally accompany the recognition of addiction in an individual may hamper enough roots.

The Arab traditions, ethos and practices perceive drug addiction

and they are found to be detached and showed inclination toward and hostility and assault.

Children of alcoholics are considered to be at high risk of developing alcoholism, when compared with other randomly selected groups, because they are more at risk of maladaptive behaviours due to a combination of many risk factors present in their lives. These include the parents' substance-abusing behaviour, which can place the child at biological, psychological and environmental risk. The above observations were revealed by a study of the children of substance abusers by (Johnson & Left, 1999) which demonstrates the relationship between parental substance abuse and subsequent alcohol problems in their children.

There are many characteristics that describe the effects of substance abuse and addiction ostensibly leading to social drifting. These characteristics may include familial, social, economic, educational, and political ones. This study will consider these various factors as they relate to addiction and describes how they may or may not lead to social drifting.

“Social drift” is a term used in social epidemiology to describe the downward mobility of an individual, in terms of the social scale,

used and its duration and any complications due to psychoactive substance use and previous treatment and rehabilitation history. It also looked at family status; social status and other details relevant to the drift aspects. The sheets were translated into Arabic and, in

city for economic reasons, while the extended family live in villages far away, is relatively new in Jordanian society. This appears to

the family. The family is known to be a protective factor against developing substance abuse problems (Cleveland et al., 2012). This was further demonstrated by many participants reporting that they kept their problems hidden from their families as they anticipated that this would cause them distress.

The stressors of their life led to emotional instability, which was obvious among participants, with many reporting that they started

There was some evidence to support the self-medication hypothesis of substance abuse (Khantzian, 1977) and the coping dimension of adolescent substance use (Wills et al., 2004). There were instances where it was family members who offered drugs to help the participants cope with problems, and this was a sign of good intention towards a relative.

used, or were encouraged to use, substances to help improve sexual performance or reduce anxiety about sex. This was a new concept, not found in the existing literature on reasons for initiation. Participants discovered later on that continuous use actually led to impotence and decline in their sexual performance and sexual dysfunction, especially in those who used heroin. This issue could contribute to lowering of the individual's self-esteem, particularly if he was married, as sexual performance is considered to be an important part of Middle Eastern culture.

Some participants reported early initiation into substance abuse at social events such as weddings. Wedding and social events in any culture are situations where families invite their relatives and friends to share in their happiness and every effort is made to make the experience pleasurable for guests. In cultures where alcohol and other intoxicant use are permitted, they are served at these events.

subsequent addiction to a particular drug; rather, any person, under the “certain conditions” or combination of circumstances may develop substance misuse problems. One may safely conclude that while negative life events may lead to downward social drift (or conversely drift may lead to negative life events), it is the ongoing stressors

that perpetuate the disability and increase the risk of relapse, the chronicity of the illness and the downward drift. Notwithstanding the results of this study, one should be careful in interpreting these results as causative since a great deal of variables are at play and because the study was not designed to answer such hypotheses. The current study is but one small step in establishing the patterns of substances abuse in Amman, Jordan. Caution should be exercised in drawing generalizations from this study due to limitations inherent in this type of studies that were outlined earlier. Further studies are needed with a more robust methodology and clear understanding of the culture under which drug addiction is maintained.

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