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Drug Addiction among Urban Youth in Bangladesh: A Law Enforcement Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Drug addiction among youth has become a major social, public health and security challenge in Bangladesh, especially in urban areas such as Dhaka City. This research is a law enforcement perspective on youth drug addiction that focuses on substance use patterns, criminal activity, and institutional issues encountered by policing agencies. A qualitative research methodology was followed and case study was the main research method. Primary data was gathered using 20 in-depth interviews with law enforcement personnel from five selected police stations (Adabor, Lalbagh, Mohammadpur, Tejgaon, and Vatara) from Dhaka City through purposive sampling. Secondary data were obtained from relevant books, academic journals and research articles, and official reports. The findings show that drugs of abuse among urban young people are mainly yaba and cannabis, with the factors such as peer pressure, unemployment, academic pressure, family disintegration and easy accessibility to drugs blamed. The study points to a strong correlation between drug addiction among the group with criminal activities such as stealing, snatching, violence, and drug trafficking networks. Law-enforcement agencies are facing great challenges like insufficient manpower, lack of well-equipped rehabilitation centers, lack of specialized training, low coordination of work between the agencies, and social stigma delaying early intervention. The study concludes that punitive, arrest-focused approaches are not enough to deal with youth drug addiction. It stresses the importance of using an integrated approach that includes law enforcement, prevention, rehabilitation and community involvement. The results would enhance the understanding of the drug-crime nexus and bring policy relevant information into the development of balanced and sustainable response for youth drug addiction in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Youth drug addiction, Law enforcement, Urban Area, Drug-related crime, Prevention and rehabilitation

Introduction

Drug addiction amongst youth has become one of the most alarming, complex social problems facing Bangladesh in the recent decades. Once considered a peripheral problem limited to certain classes, substance abuse has now transcended the socioeconomic class lines and is a problem for an increasing number of adolescents and young adults (Shaon, 2025). Rapid urbanization and economic inequality, unemployment, academic pressure, family disintegration and cultural transition have combined to create a recipe for youth being at greater risk for drug use (National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (Australia) et al., 2004). As the younger generation of the country is one of the important driving forces for economic and social development, their increasing involvement in drug addiction is a direct threat to the stability and future development of the country (Jodder, A., & Shovon, K. M. A., 2025). In recent years,

an increasing availability and intake of illicit drugs like Yaba (methamphetamine), cannabis, heroin and abused prescription drugs has been observed. According to reports by the Department of Narcotics Control, the abuser of Yaba has become the most abused drug among the youth in the urban areas because it is the cheapest drug which is easy to transport and has the stimulant effects (Mohiuddin, 2019). Youth between the ages of 15 and 29 years old are most vulnerable and often begin using drugs due to influence from their peers, out of curiosity, as a result of stress or to cope with emotional distress. What starts as experimentation often results in dependency and has severe physical, psychological and behavioral consequences (WHO, n.d.). Drug addiction among the youth is not merely a public health problem, but a multidimensional social crisis with far reaching implications. Addiction interferes with this educational attainment resulting in school and university dropout, decreased educational performance, and poor job prospects. Families of addicted youth are often faced with emotional trauma, financial strain, and social stigma, which only makes recovery efforts more difficult (Azizul & Md., 2017). At the community level, the drug abuse on a large scale causes insecurity, social disorder and lack of moral and social order. From a law enforcement perspective, the drug addiction of youth is intrinsically related to criminality and public safety. Police records and observations at the scene of the crimes suggest that a large percentage of young offenders are either directly involved in substance abuse, or they commit criminal acts to pay for their abuse. Crimes such as theft, snatching, burglary, attack and peddling of drugs are often associated with drugs dependent youths (Habiba Lilun Nahar, 2020, n.d.). Moreover, organized drug trafficking networks like to exploit young people as couriers and dealers on the streets, which can lead them to a life of long-term criminal activity. Law enforcement agencies are under tremendous operational pressure in terms of dealing with youth drug addiction. Police officers have to deal with complicated networks of drug trafficking and simultaneously work with the criminal behavior of the substance-addicted youth. Traditional approaches based on enforcement and deterrence, using high levels of arrest and incarceration have had weak results at reducing addiction-related crime. Studies suggest that the punitive measures alone often aggravate the social exclusion by pushing the young offenders into further engagement into the criminal networks rather than helping them to get rehabilitated (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (*World Drug Report*, 2021)). Another big challenge faced by the law enforcement is the changing nature of drug distribution. Advances in mobile communication, social media platforms and informal delivery systems have enabled Youth to be targeted in a discreet and efficient manner by the traffickers. This transformation has resulted to more decentralized drug markets and inability to monitor the drug markets calling for intelligence-led policing and more cooperation from the community (Haupt et al., 2022). Limited manpower, lack of technological resources and lack of specialized training further limit effective responses to law enforcement. Despite consistent efforts of the government and efforts of policing, the persistence of youth drug addiction seems to indicate the existence of structural gaps in prevention and intervention strategies. Lack of proper rehabilitation facilities, lack of coordination between the law enforcement and social service agencies, and lack of awareness programmes at the community level affect comprehensive response facilities (Rahman k. F. 2019, n.d.). In addition, social stigma of addiction puts families from seeking early help, and often leads to delayed intervention when addiction has already become severe. Given these realities, the problem of youth drug addiction must be viewed, not only as a criminal justice problem, but as a complex social phenomenon needing an integrated and preventive approach (Lan et al., 2018). Law enforcement agencies play a key role in this scheme of affairs because they often are the first point of contact for the addicted youth in institutional settings. Understanding the experiences, struggles, and views of the law enforcement personnel is therefore required in order to make balanced policies that include enforcement, prevention, and rehabilitation.

This study focuses on the drug addiction in youth in Bangladesh from a law enforcement perspective in terms of the pattern of substance abuse, criminal related behavior and institutional challenges faced by the policing agencies. By uniting the qualitative understanding with the secondary information, the goal of the research is to help create a greater understanding of the nexus between youth drug addiction and crime. Ultimately, the study brings to the point front and center the need to move away from a primarily punitive model towards a holistic approach that considers the question of youth drug addiction as one of security and as an acute social crisis.

Rationale of the Study

Drug addiction among youth has become one of the most serious and complex social problems facing Bangladesh with significant threats to the public health and social order as well as the national development. Youth form the most productive segment of the population; however, their growing participation in drug abuse is undermining human capital formation, economic growth and social stability. The easy availability of such drugs as yaba, cannabis, heroin, and abused prescription drugs has contributed to this crisis, particularly in the urban areas, where addiction to drugs especially by the youth is an alarming issue at a national level. Although the study of drug addiction has been widely studied from the medical and sociological perspectives, little attention has been paid to the problem from a law enforcement perspective in the Bangladesh scenario. From the perspective of policing, youth drug addiction is closely related to crime, violence and insecurity in the community. Law enforcement agencies often deal with the youth that are caught up in drug use in theft, snatching, assault, and drug traffickers, thus this illustrates an important connection between substance abuse and criminal activity. Understanding this nexus is important to effective crime prevention and public safety management.

The rationale of this study is in an attempt to address this research gap by examining drug addiction by youths through the experiences and challenges of the law enforcement agencies. Traditional methods of punishment, which were focused on arrest and incarceration, have been of limited use, since they often do not address the social and psychological causes of addiction. Therefore, more emphasis on prevention, rehabilitation and better institutional capacity is critically needed

Objectives of the Study

The overall objective of this study is to hype the issue of drug addiction among youth in Bangladesh from the law enforcement perspective with special attention to its social and criminal dimensions as well as the institutional dimension. To achieve this broad aim, the study aims to achieve the following specific objectives:

1. To examine the natures, patterns and causes of drug addiction among youth in Bangladesh.
2. To analyze the social and criminal impacts of youth drug addiction from a law enforcement perspective.
3. To identify the key challenges faced by law enforcement agencies in controlling youth drug abuse in Bangladesh.
4. To explore effective preventive and intervention strategies for addressing youth drug addiction.

Methodology of the Study

This study adopted a qualitative research approach to explore youth drug addiction from a law enforcement perspective in Dhaka City, Bangladesh. The main method of the study was case study. Data were collected through 20 in-depth interviews with law enforcement personnel from five selected police stations (thanas) in Dhaka City: Adabor, Lalbagh, Mohammadpur, Tejgaon, and Vataarausing purposive sampling. The respondents were selected based on their direct involvement and professional experience in dealing with youth-related drug cases. Both primary and secondary data sources were utilized in the study. Secondary data were collected from books, academic journals, research articles, reports, and other relevant documents. The collected data were carefully processed, organized, and reviewed by the researcher. Data analysis was conducted using a descriptive thematic approach, where recurring patterns and themes were identified and developed in accordance with the research objectives. Direct quotations from the interviews were included to support, illustrate, and strengthen the thematic analysis.

Drug Addiction among Urban Youth in Dhaka City: Pattern and Causes

Drug addiction among adolescent in Dhaka City has become a serious problem socially, economically and criminal. Based upon qualitative interviews with law enforcement officials, this section discusses the dominant patterns of drug use and the undercurrent causes of youth addiction from a policing perspective.

Commonly Abused Drugs

Law-enforcement officials consistently reported that the most widely abused drugs in the case of urban youth in Dhaka City is yuba. Its popularity is mostly due to its low price and easy availability and the fact that it has powerful stimulant effects that give the user a sense of temporary energy, confidence, and escape from their emotions. One of the officers describe how the use of drugs has spread to all ages and social classes:

“At the moment, yuba is the most commonly used drug.” Drug addiction has reached teenagers and adults.”

Cannabis (ganja) is another widely used substance, especially among adolescents, students and unemployed youths. Many respondents said that ganja is the most common drug seized by police operations:

“Among the drugs, the sale of ganja is the highest. In Mohammadpur, there are more seizures of cannabis.”

In contrast, heroin, injectable drugs and phensedyl were reported to be more common among marginalized and economically disadvantaged youth including street children and informal laborers. Additionally, a small but increasing number of youths with more affluent backgrounds were said to use synthetic drugs, like LSD and crystal meth (ice).

Overall, the data suggests that the use of drugs among youth in Dhaka City is pervasive, socially stratified, and dominated by the use of low-cost substances with yuba and cannabis being the center of the problem.

Contributing Factors of Urban Youth Involving Drug Addiction

Youth drug addiction in Dhaka City is caused by several factors that are interrelated and not limited to a particular cause or causes. Law-enforcement respondents cited the following as the key contributors:

Peer Pressure and Youth Sub Culture

Peer influence became one of the most powerful instigating factors of drug use. Respondents noted that youth who are living in a shared accommodation, hostel or informal group setting are especially vulnerable. Drug use frequently starts as experimentation in groups of one's peers and gradually becomes habitual:

“It is often witnessed that bachelors stay in one flat, and if they stay together, there is an increase in drug usage among them.”

Peer acceptance, curiosity and the need to look current or courageous are further reinforcing influences for drug-taking behaviour with adolescents and young adults.

Unemployment and Underemployment

Unemployment and lack of stable income were repeatedly mentioned as major structural causes of youth drug addiction. Many young people feel frustrated, hopeless and have no purpose in life because of a lack of jobs. According to respondents, drug use is often started as a coping mechanism which later converts into a drug selling involvement:

“They have no employment and feel frustrated. Since they have no other source of income, the supply of drugs becomes one of the fastest ways for them to make money.”

This link between unemployment, addiction and crime is creating a vicious circle that is hard to break through enforcement alone.

Academic Pressure and Frustration

Several of the respondents identified academic stress as a factor, especially among students at SSC, Intermediate and early University levels. Examination pressure, fear of failing and emotional impulsiveness tend to push students to substance use:

“This tendency is found in those studying SSC or Intermediate level sometimes due to a rush of emotion or show-off.”

Academic failure is usually mixed with peer influence and emotional instability, which add up to being more susceptible to drug use.

Family Disintegration and Poor Supervision

Weak supervision by family members, financial hardship and familial brawl are strong indicators that the youth will indulge in drug abuse. Respondents stressed that parents are often not able to recognize the early warning signs such as smoking or behavioral changes:

“Parents need to be aware of behavioral changes at an early age. Ignoring these signs is a failure of guardianship.”

Family breakdown leads to a lack of emotional support and moral direction; thus, the youths are exposed to negative external influence.

Being Exposed to Urban Crime Networks

Youth living in neighborhoods that are prone to crime are often subject to organized drug networks. Respondents explained that a number of young users are slowly being recruited into criminal groups, as carriers or dealers at street level:

“Since they have no other source of income, drug supply becomes one of the fastest ways for them to make money.”

Such exposure normalizes criminal behavior and speeds the progression from drug use to criminal behavior.

Easy Access to Drugs through Dealers in the Area

The easy availability of drugs through local dealers and drug hubs was found to be an important enabling factor. According to some respondents, drug selling has been occurring openly in some areas:

“Drug dealing is being done out in the open. If people inform us, we can do something about it.”

Easy access leads to lower barriers to initiation and makes prevention much more difficult.

Social and Criminal Impacts of Drug Addiction

Youth drug addiction has far-reaching consequences in Dhaka City which go beyond the individual user, affecting the family, community and public safety. Law-enforcement officials stressed the social disruption as well as criminal escalation as direct results of youth drug abuse.

Social Consequences of Drug Addiction among Urban Youth

Youth drug addiction causes a number of social issues and they are as follows:

School Dropouts/ University Dropouts:

Drug addiction seriously interferes with the student's academic participation, concentration, and discipline, often leading to dropping out of school and university. Law-enforcement officials have noted that addicted youths progressively lose interest in educational and regular attendance, thus reducing the opportunities for their future and social marginalization.

Family Conflict and Domestic Violence

Family conflict was one of the most obvious outcomes of youth drug addiction. Addicted youths often demand money from their families, resulting in quarrels, thefts and physical violence in households. One respondent stated:

“We have dealt with so many cases where we go to a house and there are conflicts between husband and wife, and it is because of drugs.”

Another officer explained how addiction leads to family instability:

“If there is money in the family, they fight with their parents or steal from their own homes to arrange drug money.”

Social Stigma and Isolation

Social stigma about drug addiction prevents families from getting help in a timely manner. Respondents stated that families tend to conceal addiction out of fear of shame and social judgment, which postpones the intervention and aggravates the issue:

“Society sees drugs in a negative way but families hide the problem instead of seeking help.”

As a result, addicted youths become socially isolated and removed from support groups.

Deteriorating Moral and Social values

Respondents stressed that long drug use destroys moral judgment and social responsibility. Addicted youths lose respect for family norms, elders, and social rules, leading to social decay in general:

“By looking at the drug addicts, it can be understood that they are unable to distinguish right and wrong.”

Criminal Implications

From a policing perspective, there is a high correlation between youth drug addiction and criminality. Law-enforcement officials found the following patterns of crime:

Theft and Mugging for Financing Drugs

To get money to buy drugs, addicted young people often resort to snatching, theft and mugging. Several of the respondents reported escalation to the point of violent acts:

“To get money for drugs, they steal, in some cases they even stab people with knives.”

Drug Trafficking as Low-Level Carriers

Many addicted youths get involved in drug trafficking as low-level drug carriers or street-level sellers. This involvement means that they are able to finance their own consumption while becoming embedded in criminal networks:

“Since they have no other source of income, drug supply becomes one of the fastest ways for them to make money.”

Gang Related Violence

Respondents explained that drug-dependent youths are frequently attracted to the activities of gangs, which result in more territorial violence and organized crime:

“Drug addiction and crime are like twin brothers; one influences and one influences the other.”

Assault and Public Disorder

Drug use particularly yaba was associated with aggressive behavior, loss of self-control and public disorder. Officers observed frequent cases of assault, harassment and intimidation:

“Those who take yaba believe that they are the most powerful person in the world. They fear no one.”

Challenges Encountered by Law Enforcement

Despite ongoing efforts of anti-drug operations, law enforcement agencies in Dhaka City have been confronted with several structural, operational, and social challenges, which constraint their efforts to control youth drug addiction effectively. The qualitative findings suggest that these constraints undermine the results of enforcement and the limitations of punishment-oriented approaches.

Lack of Manpower and Logistical Resources

One of the biggest challenges named by respondents is the lack of manpower and logistical support. Law-enforcement officers have reported that drug control is merely one of many duties that they need to undertake and it is difficult to operate sustained and intensive anti-drug operations, especially in urban areas with many people. A respondent Khaled Hossain stated that alone the police cannot fight the problem:

“It is not possible for me alone - everybody needs to gather together and act according to the rules.”

Another officer underlined the ineffectiveness of policing the drugs and other duties:

“Police have a lot of responsibility and not just drugs. Despite efforts to control drugs remains very difficult.”

Limited access to vehicles, surveillance equipment and operational manpower all further limit enforcement, particularly in high-risk neighborhoods.

Poor Rehabilitation and Detoxification facilities

Respondents consistently raised the issue of the lack of appropriate rehabilitation and detoxification facilities, especially for youth drug users. Arresting addicts and not having treatment necessarily creates a cycle of relapse, and a scenario that enforcement cannot break. One respondent stated:

“After being arrested they are released, but there is no proper rehabilitation system.”

Another officer stressed the physical dependency of addicts:

“Those who take drugs do not actually want to continue, but they cannot give it up because of severe symptoms of withdrawal.”

The lack of district-level and youth-oriented rehabilitation centers puts further pressure on the police to respond to a public health problem by criminal justice means.

Lack of Specialized Training on Youth-Focused Drug Prevention

A further challenge that was identified in the interviews is the lack of specialized training of law enforcement officers in youth-centered drug prevention and intervention. Respondents noted that most officers make use of traditional methods of enforcement, which are not always appropriate for dealing with the psychological, emotional and developmental needs of young drug users.

Without training in early identification, counseling, diversion and youth engagement, officers are limited in their capacity to prevent addiction at an early stage. This gap reinforces the use of arrest responses, which are less effective in bringing about long-term behavioral change among youth.

Social Stigma Discouraging Families from Seeking Help

Social stigma about drug addiction was found to be a large limitation to effective intervention. According to the respondents, families did not seek treatment and showed little

cooperation with law enforcement authorities out of fear they would be socially shamed about their addiction. One respondent noted:

“Society views drugs in a negative light whereas families conceal the issue.”

Another officer explained that it's common for police to be called as the addiction turns to crime and it's not possible to prevent it at early stages. This stigma-driven silence results in weaknesses in prevention at the community level and places almost the entire burden of response on law enforcement agency.

Poor Coordination among Police and Health Service and Social Welfare Agencies

Respondents also stressed poor coordination among the police, health services, NGOs, and social welfare institutions as an important challenge. Although several organizations are working in drug prevention and rehabilitation, their actions tend to be fragmented and poorly integrated. One respondent explained:

“We cannot rely solely on law-enforcement agencies. Everybody has to be working together.”

The lack of structured referral systems, shared data and joint operational frameworks, results in a lack of effectiveness of both enforcement and rehabilitation initiatives.

Strategies to Prevent and Control Diseases

Given the complex nature of youth drug addiction in Dhaka City, law enforcement officials underlined that drug addiction could not be controlled by depending on punishment alone, but must be done with a preventive, community-based and rehabilitative approach. The following strategies were frequently reported by respondents as being critical to sustainable prevention and control.

Community Policing

Community policing emerged as one of the prime preventative approaches in tackling the issue of drug addiction in youth at the community level. Respondents stressed that trust-building between police and local residents makes it possible to identify drug “hotspots” early (drug hubs), youth in danger and local dealers. One officer stated:

“If someone will please tell us that drugs are being supplied in an area, we will be able to do something about it.”

Community policing helps law enforcement get out of the business of reacting to calls for service and get into the business of preventing crime. However, respondents also said that community co-operation is still limited, and often depends on the willingness of people to share information without fear or stigma.

Awareness and Education

Awareness and education were found to be important tools for the prevention of initial drug use among youth. Respondents strongly supported school and college-based awareness programs, seminars and campaigning to the public to educate young person’s to the dangers of drugs. One of the respondents highlighted early education:

“Awareness about drugs should be spread from schools. If we can start from the primary level, people will gradually understand that how dangerous drugs are.”

Law-enforcement officials also cited the importance of media and community programs in helping to correct misconceptions that help normalize substance use, especially among adolescents.

Family and Community Interaction

Respondents always highlighted the importance of family supervision and community responsibility in preventing youth drug addiction. Parents were established as the first line of defense by monitoring behavior, peer groups and daily activities. One officer explained:

“Parents should keep track of where their children are going and who they are hanging out with.”

Community engagement through sports clubs, youth centers and social organizations were also seen as an effective way to engage young people in positive activities and prevent them from being idle:

“Youth should be engaged in sports, social work, and community service to give them no time to take up harmful habits.”

Rehabilitation instead of Punishment

A strong consensus was reached among respondents in terms of the effectiveness of rehabilitation and early intervention rather than punitive measures alone, particularly among young persons who use drugs. Arrest without treatment was widely regarded as failing in the prevention of relapse. One respondent stated:

“I put more of a priority on counseling. In some cases, medical treatment is also required.”

Respondents also expressed the importance of the collaboration with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and rehabilitation centers to offer counseling, detoxification, and rehabilitation support. Diversion programs for first-time and youth offenders were popular alternatives to incarceration.

Discussion

This study was conducted on youth drug addiction in Dhaka City from the law enforcement perspective by combining the methods of qualitative primary data and pre-existing secondary literature. A comparison between the two shows that there is excellent convergence on some key drug use, contributing factors and crime linkages patterns, but the main findings make important contributions to the field through operational and experiential understandings that are often not available in the secondary research. Both primary and secondary data identify yaba and cannabis as the most commonly abused drug by urban youth clearly. Secondary sources like Mohiuddin (2019) and reports by Department of Narcotics Control describe the dominance of yaba because of its low price, portability and stimulant influences. Law-enforcement respondents in this study confirmed the above trends in a significant way, repeatedly mentioning yaba as the most common drug seized during routine operations. Similarly, results reported by various studies in terms of the widespread use of cannabis (Azizul & Md., 2017) showed in police observation, especially among students and the unemployed group of youth. While secondary literature discusses these patterns in a statistical fashion, the primary data does present a practical confirmation of the patterns as they are experienced by frontline enforcement personnel.

Regarding causal factors, there is a high level of consistency between the findings of the study and existing research. According to prior studies, the significant contributors to the development of drug addiction among youth are peer pressure, unemployment, academic stress, family disintegration, and instability in urban social settings (Rahman, 2019; Shaon, 2025). Law-enforcement respondents also noted these reasons, especially highlighting the role of peer influenced and unemployed people being immediate triggers. However, the primary data contribute to the current body of knowledge by demonstrating how these factors intersect with each other in the real world - for example, how unemployed youth often slip from drug use into the drug distribution business as an act of survival, perpetuating the cycle of crime and addiction. The correlation between youth's drug addiction and crime is one of the biggest areas of agreement between the primary and secondary data. Previous research draws attention to the role of substance abuse in contributing to theft, snatching, assault and gang violence (Habiba Lilun Nahar, 2020; Lan et al., 2018). Police respondents in this study gave firsthand accounts of such crimes, describing how addicted youth act in increasingly violent ways in order to obtain drugs to use. Furthermore, while the secondary literature has talked about youth exploitation by organized drug networks, the primary findings provide concrete examples of the way young users are incorporated into trafficking networks as low-level carriers, normalizing criminal behavior at an early age. In terms of the challenges of law enforcement, the study's findings are that they strongly endorse existing critiques of punitive, arrest-centered approaches. Secondary sources such as the UNODC World Drug Report (2021) maintains that punishment without rehabilitation has a history of deepening the marginalization process and also fails to mitigate addiction-related crime. This was confirmed by law enforcement respondents who cited repeated relapse because of a lack of adequate rehabilitation and detoxification facilities. The study also strengthens secondary findings regarding insufficient manpower, lack of training, and poor coordination between agencies, showing that they are serious constraints to effective responses. Finally, the preventive strategies proposed by the respondents are consistent with the recommendations grounded in scientific evidence that exist in the literature. Community policing, awareness programs, supervision of family units, rehabilitation-oriented interventions are much supported in secondary research (WHO; Haupt et al., 2022). However, key information is added in the form of primary sources which introduce important nuance and the recognition of practical issues such as social stigma, delayed family reporting, and lack of cooperation in the community, all of which tend to weaken implementation at the local level.

Overall, the comparison demonstrates that although secondary literature provides accurate accounts of the macro-level dynamics of youth drug addiction, the primary data adds value to the understanding by explaining how these dynamics play out in the actual day-to-day policing context. This adds to the central argument of this study, which supports the view that youth drug addiction should be seen not merely as a criminal justice problem, but as a multidimensional social crisis to which there are integrated enforcement, prevention, and rehabilitation strategies.

Recommendations

Strengthening Inter-Agency Coordination

Effective coordination among the police, the Department of Narcotics Control, health services and social welfare agencies should be improved. Integrated referral systems, joint operations and information sharing can help improve prevention, treatment and reintegration efforts.

Expand Youth Rehabilitative and Counseling Centers

There is urgent need to increase the number of youth-friendly rehabilitation and counselling centres in Dhaka City. Accessible and affordable treatment facilities can help to reduce relapse, prevent reoffending and move response from punishment to recovery.

Improve Community Policing and School Based Prevention Programs

Community policing initiatives should be increased in order to foster trust between law enforcement and the community. At the same time, school-based and college-based awareness programmes should be strengthened in order to teach young people about the dangers of drug use and healthy ways of coping.

Train Law-Enforcement Officers in Youth-Sensitive and Rights Based Approaches

Specialized training of law enforcement officers in youth psychology, early intervention, counseling, and diversion programs should be provided. Youth sensitive and rights-based approaches can enhance engagement with young offenders and minimise harmful outcomes.

Promote Public Awareness for Addiction Treatment Stigma Reduction

Public awareness campaigns are needed to overcome the social stigma associated with drug addiction. Encouraging families and communities to accept addiction as a disease that can be treated may encourage early help-seeking behavior and community cooperation with law enforcement.

Conclusion

Youth drug addiction in Dhaka City has become a serious and multidimensional social problem having far-reaching consequences for public safety, social cohesion and national development. The findings of this study, based on qualitative interviews with the personnel of law enforcement systems and supplemented by the secondary literature, show that the phenomenon of youth drug addiction is not just a criminal phenomenon, but a complex social problem that is deeply connected with unemployment, the influence of peers, the disintegration of the family, and urban crime networks. Substances such as yaba and cannabis are central in the urban drug scene, and addiction among the youth often results in criminal activities like theft, violence and engagement in drug trafficking.

From the law enforcement perspective, the research demonstrates that old legislation, which focuses on arrest and incarceration, is limited in its ability to deal with youth drug addiction. The lack of adequate rehabilitation facilities, insufficient manpower and training, a lack of coordination between agencies, and ongoing social stigma go a long way towards hindering effective intervention. Police officers often become first institutional contact for addicted youth, and this places them in a difficult situation of having to balance public order with a public health issue. These findings underscore the need for a balanced and integrated approach that includes enforcement as well as prevention, rehabilitation, and community engagement.

Overall, the study concludes that sustainable control of youth drug addiction in Dhaka City must shift from a purely enforcement model of control to a holistic approach that considers the social, psychological, and structural dimensions of drug addiction. Law-enforcement agencies need robust institutional partnerships and sufficient resources and cooperation from the community in order to respond effectively to this growing crisis

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