

INTER-RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DRUG USE, ANOMIE, ALIENATION AND AUTHORITARIANISM AMONGST UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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SUMMARY

The degree of addictive substance usage score and three personality variables, namely, authoritarianism, alienation, and anomie were measured in 197 university students through a self-administered questionnaire. WHO's Youth Survey Questionnaire for drug use, Varma *et al.*'s scale of Authoritarianism, Stole's scale of Anomie, and Peirlin's scale of Alienation, were used. A study of the relationship between the co-variables was studied and is discussed.

The term 'anomie' was coined by Durkheim in 1893 to conceptualize "deregulation" or "normlessness" that may result with rapid industrialization, technological growth and urbanization. According to him, the essence of modernization weakens the feeling of "rootedness" and of "belongingness" which man need to be able to maintain their identity.

The concept of alienation originated with Hegel who used it to denote the distance between mind and reality, and to denote states causing self-alienation, loss of sense of identity, a feeling of depersonalization, the cause of which is traced back to some environmental pressure. In other words, alienation refers to various mental states often identified by such terms as powerlessness (Marx, 1968), meaninglessness, anomie (normlessness), social isolation and self-entrancement. Social scientists and mental health professionals have begun to see evidence of widespread alienation as a major element of modern life. "Alienation as we find it in the modern society is almost total, it provides the relationship of man to his work, to the things he consumes, to the state, to his fellowman, to himself" (Fromm, 1955).

The concept of authoritarianism, and authoritarian personality are primarily the product of the research reported by Adorno *et al.* (1950). Authoritarianism is a collective term used for various anti-democratic and potentially fascist social attitudes. Authoritarian personality is characterized by cognitive rigidity and intolerance to ambiguity and is manifested by conventionalism, authoritarian submission, authoritarian aggression, rejection of individual and personal attitudes, superstition, stereotyped behaviour, projectivity, etc. It has been found to correlate highly with anti-semitism, ethnocentricism, and politico-economic conservatism.

Anomic, alienation, and authoritarianism may be related concepts. The more authoritarian the society (especially if the authority is invisible) the more alienated the individual is likely to feel.

Use of dependence-producing drugs has been reported to be more prevalent by and large in modernized, urbanized, and affluent countries. Perhaps the consequences of industrialization and urbanization may lead to a feeling of intense boredom, (ennui) loneliness and emotional vacuum and abuse of drugs and alcohol may be means to escape

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these mental states. Fromm (1955) reported, on the basis of information drawn from WHO 1951 and 1952 reports, that incidence of suicide and alcoholism largely coincide and are more so in more urbanized and industrialized countries. Blane *et al.*, (1968) found that the students' attitude towards irresponsible use of alcohol are related to alienation in general and to normlessness is particular.

What Durkheim feared for the rapidly industrializing societies of Western Europe of the late last century, may be relevant to many developing countries in the world today. The intense feelings of loneliness, meaninglessness, powerlessness, lack of emotional support from the family to face the stresses of life, lack of feelings of rootedness and belongingness could be largely the result of rapid social change and urbanization. In such mental states, consequently, the modern youth, entrapped in a valueless society tries to find an escape. One such consequence at social level may be the increasing use of dependence-producing drugs.

As India is a developing country, passing through rapid social change in terms of industrialization and urbanization associated with the breakdown of traditional family systems, and as there is some evidence of increase in the non-medical use of drugs, the present study was carried out to see the interrelationship between anomie, alienation, authoritarianism and non-medical use of drugs.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

A questionnaire was prepared to measure the personality variables of anomie, alienation, and authoritarianism; to enquire into the use of dependence-producing drugs and to elicit information on certain socio-demographic variables. Different scales included were Sroles Scale of Anomie Pearlman's Scale of Alienation and Varma *et al.*'s scale of Authoritarianism. These personality scales have earlier been well

adapted/standardized and have been found reliable in North India. A number of items were drafted on the lines of the WHO Youth Survey Questionnaire to ascertain the extent and pattern of use (i.e. ever in life-time, during the past 12 months, during the past 30 days and frequency thereof) of seven drugs/drug-groups for nonmedical purpose (i.e. without a doctor's or health worker's prescription). The drugs chosen were the ones that have earlier been found to be used by students in North India (Varma and Dang, 1979), namely, alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, amphetamines, opium, tranquillizers, and sedatives. Socio-demographic variables included were age, sex, residence (urban/rural), father's education, religion, and academic achievement. The question to measure rural/urban variable was, "where did you live for most of the first ten years of your life?" Places were considered as rural or urban as designated in the Census of India, 1971.

The questionnaire was self-administered to a total of 200 postgraduate students of various departments of Panjab University, Chandigarh, in the age-range of 17-26 years. To make the sample representative, an equal proportion of departments from faculties of sciences, arts, and social sciences were included. Both sexes were equally represented.

The drug data were analysed to ascertain the percentage of ever-use, past use, and current use. The degree of addictive substance usage score was calculated*. To ascertain the relationship of personality, drug use and socio-demographic variables, inter-correlations were calculated for the

*The "degree of addictive substance usage" score was obtained by giving the following weightage to the subjects' responses on each drug:

- (a) Every use : No 1, Yes 2;
- (b) Use in the past 12 months : No. 1, Yes 2;
- (c) Use in the past 30 days : No 1, 1-5 days 2, 6-19 days 3, 20 or more days 4.

Thus the possible range was from 3 to 8 on each drug, and, there being 7 drugs under study, 21 to 56 for each subject.

total as well as for each category of the socio-economic variables studied.

RESULTS

The results showed a highly significant positive correlation between authoritarianism and anomie ($r=.301$, $p<.01$) for the entire sample. There was an inverse but not significant relationship between drug use and authoritarianism, alienation and anomie, 'r' being minus .064, .064 and .094 respectively. Alienation had a modest positive correlation with anomie and a negative correlation with authoritarianism.

The calculation of correlations between the four variables for the various socio-economic categories yielded some interesting

results. These are summarized separately for each socio-economic variables :

Sex : Both the sexes gave significantly positive correlation between authoritarianism and anomie. In case of females, drug was correlated significantly with authoritarianism (negative) and with alienation (positive), and authoritarianism correlated negatively but not quite significantly with alienation.

Age : Again, there was significant positive correlation between authoritarianism and anomie in each age group. While in the younger age-groups, there was a negative relationship between drug use and each of these personality variables (many values significant or reaching significance),

Coefficients of correlation between Authoritarianism (Au), Alienation (Al), Anomie (An) and Drug Use (DU)

	Corre. bet. Au and Al	Corre. bet. Au and An	Corre. bet. Au and DU	Corre. bet. Al and An	Corre. bet. Al and DU	Corre. bet. An and DU
<i>Total Sample</i> (N=197)	-.037	.301**	-.065	.058	-.064	-.094
<i>Sex</i>						
Male (N=95) .. ..	.030	.367**	.060	.017	-.060	-.020
Female (N=102)	-.172	.198*	-.206*	.033	.195*	-.061
<i>Age</i>						
17-20 yrs. (N=75) .. ..	.032	.281**	-.091	.066	-.188	-.167
21-22 yrs. (N=73)	-.083	.305**	-.278*	-.020	-.106	-.235*
23-26 yrs. (N=48)	-.086	.299*	.174	.122	.164	.157
<i>Religion</i>						
Hindu (N=118)	-.079	.243**	-.138	.062	-.175	-.163
Sikh (N=68) .. ..	.038	.332**	.051	.049	.086	.050
<i>Father's Education</i>						
Illit. and up to Primary (N=21)	-.372	.079	.143	-.343	-.106	.104
Secondary and High School (N=39) .. ..	.106	.385*	-.015	.298	-.182	-.098
University Education	-.006	.328**	-.087	.047	-.021	-.113
<i>Domicile</i>						
Rural (N=55)	-.025	.275*	.071	.229	.116	.004
Urban (N=141)	-.035	.313**	-.157	.005	-.118	-.181
<i>Academic Achievement</i>						
Up (N=67)	-.042	.297*	-.102	-.099	.104	-.090
Up-down (N=31) .. ..	.145	.254	-.034	.118	-.190	.000
Down-Up (N=11) .. ..	.533	-.042	.031	-.091	.529	.079
Down (N=30)	-.138	.378*	.303	.045	.340	.244
Unchanged (N=50)	-.203	.369**	-.388**	.241	.031	-.302*

*-p. .05

**-p. .01

in case of older age-group, such values were small and positive.

Religion : Again, like younger age-groups, Hindus gave negative correlation between drug use and the personality variables. On the other hand Sikhs gave small positive correlations. Both religions gave significantly positive correlation between authoritarianism and anomie.

Father's education : In case of those with higher educated fathers, there was significant positive correlation between authoritarianism and anomie. The correlations between drug use and personality variables were mostly small and in the negative direction for most educational groups.

Rural/Urban : Both groups gave significantly positive correlation between authoritarianism and anomie. In case of the urban group, the correlation coefficients between drug use and personality variables were negative and significant or reaching significance. On the other hand in the rural group these coefficients were small and positive.

Summarizing the results, it can be said that in the total sample as well as in most of the socio-economic groups, there was significant positive correlation between authoritarianism and anomie. By and large, females, younger age-groups, Hindus, those from urban background and with higher father's education gave negative correlation between drug use and the personality variables, whereas the others gave small positive correlations. Strangely, the correlation between alienation and anomie was quite insignificant for the total sample as well as the various groups, except for those from rural background and with fathers with secondary school education where there was a modest, but not significant, positive correlation. As regards the correlation between authoritarianism and alienation, modest (but not significant) negative coefficients were found in case of females and those with up to primary education. In case of others, the correla-

tion coefficients were very small.

DISCUSSION

The single most important as well as surprising finding of the present study was that there was a significant negative correlation between drug use and the three personality variables in certain categories of subjects, namely, the females, the younger age groups, Hindus, and those with higher parental education and urban background. Although a few studies have been reported on the personality correlates of drug use in India, these have concerned themselves with simple personality dimensions like neuroticism and introversion. No studies have been reported from India on the relationship between complex psycho-social variables studied in this study with drug use. The finding of the relationship between drug use and the personality variables suggest that as opposed to the expectation, the drug users were not authoritarian or alienated from the society. Drug use can thus be viewed more in terms of manifestation of identification with the society. That such correlations were very small and insignificant in case of males may indicate that drug use is dependent on assimilation in the social values in case of males. On the other hand, it seems that in case of female, a stronger identification with the social norms and higher authoritarianism facilitates drug use. In a general way, it can be speculated that the higher authoritarianism would have provided the aggressive drive needed to overcome the usual diffidence in their case and a lower alienation and anomie indicate that their drug use could have been an attempt to copy the drug using behaviour in the more progressive and modern sections of the society. Low alienation and anomie in their case thus could indicate that these females were more highly integrated with the changing social values.

As regards the correlation between the personality variables and drug use in case

of the younger age group, hindus and those from urban background and with higher father's education, it is impossible that this was a function of sex, as in our sample, females were younger, more frequently hindus and from urban background and with higher parental education.

Significant positive correlation between authoritarianism and anomie was expected and in the direction of some of the studies earlier reported. However, the relationship of alienation with authoritarianism and anomie, respectively, was quite insignificant which was a strange finding going against the studies cited above. The insignificant correlation between authoritarianism and alienation may indicate that at least in the society under study, the more authoritarian individuals are not necessarily more alienated. Perhaps a higher degree of authoritarianism serves as a defence against alienation in a rapidly changing society.

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