DRUG USE IN A RURAL COMMUNITY IN BIHAR : SOME PSYCHOSOCIAL CORRELATES

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ABSTRACT

Drug use has been an integral part of any culture. The use depends on many factors including the availability. In the present study the drug use in a rural community of Chotanagpur Plateau in the Ranchi district of Bihar is focussed. The sample consisted of 157 inhabitants above the age of 15 yrs of the village Boreya in Kanke block. A sample of drug users was compared with nondrug users of the same community on the measures of stressful life events and locus of control. The results indicate that besides tobacco alcohol in the form of locally brewed 'handia' (rice beer) and 'mahua' (made from mahua flowers) was used by 334 (28.87%) individuals. Cannabis was frequently used (25.15%) Harder drugs were not used at all. There was an increase in stressful life events in the year prior to the use of drugs. The increase in life events was especially seen in the elderly age group (35-50yrs). There was no difference in the locus of control scores between the users and the nonusers. The results indicate the role of significant life events in the current use of drugs.

key words: Drug use - epidemiology, locus of control. life events.

INTRODUCTION

Use of mood altering substances has been a part of any culture. However the recent upsurge of use of harder drugs is particularly disturbing. Drug use in India has a long history. From 'somras' to the current 'brown sugar', drugs have always been associated with rereational and non recreational us. Use of locally brewed alcohol has a subcultural sanction and is taken by almost everyone on festive occasions. Use of cannabis in the form of bhang and ganja has its own rules of use.

Various epidemiologoical surveys have been conducted in India. The use of alcohol has varied from 2.2% (Dube & Handa 1969) to 74.2% (Deb & Jindal 1974). The former was enducted around the city of agra in U.P and the latter in the bhatinda district of Punjab. Varma et. al (1980) found rates of current use in Punjab to be 45.9% in Jalandhar and 27.7% in Chandigarh.

Sociocultural influences have been focussed in studies by Khan (1978) and Khan & Krishna (1981) and they noted the role of family in relation to the dug use. Shukla (1979) noted in a community survey in rural Uttar pradesh that the alcohol users can be divided into three types based on caste viz, those castes wich had more users than nonusers, for e.g

chamars, those castes in which the numbers were the same, for e.g. kayasthas and those in which the number of nonusers was higher for e.g, brahmins.

The present study focusses on the drug use in rural Bihar in a village in Chotanagpur plateau located about 13kms from Ranchi city. An attempt was made to understand the relationship of current drug use to certain psychosocial factors viz, the locus of control and the stressful life events. Studies involving locus of control in drug use have reported conflicting findings. There seems to be an internal orientation in remitters from alcohol use (Huckstadt 1987). Life events research too has been beset with methodological problems. Generally it has been noted that the stress rose dramatically in the one year prior to the onset (Tottossion, 1983).

AIM

1. To find out the prevalance of drug use including alcohol, cannabis, opiates and other prescription drugs in a rural community of chotanagpur plateau in Hihar and

2. to compare the groups of users and non users on parameters of stressful life events and locus of control.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The study was conducted in the village Boreya

of Kanke block, Ranchi district of Bihar. Inhabitants above the age of 15 yrs were included in the study. The drug user was defined as one who had used drugs daily in the one month prior to the interview. The drugs included in the survey were alcohol, cannabis, tobacco, opium, heroin, tranquilizers (benzodiazepines & other prescription drugs that were used in excess amounts or durtion than intended), and any other drugs if they were reported. A door to door survey was conducted to indentify the drug user. From the group of drug users a subsample was recruited for a detailed assesment. From the population of nonusers a representative subsample was recruited for comparison with the users on the psychological parameters.

There were 1157 individuals in the village above the age of 15 yrs of which 334 were fulfilling the drug user's criteria. Of these 334 individuals, 85 consented for detailed interview using the locus of control scale and the persumptive stressful life events scale The rest of users either did not give their consent or were unavailable for interview. The number of nonusers who consented for the detailed evaluation using the above tools were 121. The group of users and nonusers were similar in their sex distribution ($X^2 = 0.08$, df 1; NS) There were 63 individuals who had used drugs in their lifetime but not in the last one month. They were not included in the detailed evaluation.

Tools

i. Structured Interview Schedule:

This schedule collected data pertaining to the sociodemographic variables and the drug use related information. It was designed keeping the study in mind so that it collected information about the above variables in a short time. The administration of the schedule took between 15 to 20 minutes.

2. Presumptive Stressful Life Events Scale (Singh et. al 1983)

This scale was developed by Prof Gurmeet Singh and coworkers in 1983 and has been used in a number of studies in India. It has 51 items relating to the various stressful events in the life of an individual. It has been seen to have a high reliability across workers. The administration to the subjects in the study was done according to the guidelines in the manual.

3. PGI Locus of Control Scale (Menon et al 1975)

This scale was developed by Menon et al in 1975 in the department of Psychiatry at the Post gsraduate Indtitute of Medical education and Research, Chandigarh. The scale is in Hindi and hence the administration was easy. The scale has been found to be reliable and valid measure of the Internal-External control as a measure of the Locus of control.

Analysis

Chi-square test and t-test were used to compare the groups of users and nonusers on the variable of locus of control and stressful life events.

RESULTS

The study found the drug use prevalence to be 28.9% for the current users, 5.5.% for the ever users i.e those individuals who had taken drugs sometimes in their life but not in the last one month The use of tobacco was not included in the analysis.

TABLE I :
SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLE DISTRIBU-TION

	Users (n=334)	Nonusers (n=760)
Age		
15-24	32	302
25-34	105	194
35-44	74	95
45-54	69	84
>55	54	85
Sex		
male	279	260
female	55	500
Education		
<v	246	451
VI-XI	53	159
X-XII	24	107
>XII		
Marital status		
married	293	511
single	16	51
sep/div/wid	25	56
Caste		
Sch tribe	121	69
Sch caste	53	40
backward	12	25
others	148	626

The distribution of the socio-demographic variables is shown in Table I. 31.4% of the users were in the age range of 25 to 34 years whereas 40% of the users were in the range of 15 to 24 years. Most of the nonusers were females (65.8%) whereas 83.5% users were males. All categories were equally represented across the users and nonusers educationwise, though there were 73.6% subjects who had read upto fifth class in the users category. Others i.e castes other than scheduled tribes/castes or backward castes were overrepresented in the nonsures. There was no difference between users and nonusers in terms of marital status.

The analysis of drug use variable revealed that in the current users category other than tobacco the most common drug of use was alcohol in all the 334 users. The commonly used alcohol was locally brewed 'handia' (rice beer) or 'mahua' (brewed from mahua flowers). Indian made foreign liquor was used by only 1.7% (6) of the users of alcohol. Cannabis was a commonly used drug in 25.15% of the users and the most common mode of intake was oral in the form of bhang. Opium was used by only one individual in the users category.

Of the 334 users 81 were selected for psychological assesment. 121 nonusers were also included for comparison. The psychological parameters assesed were locus of control and life events. The locus of control assesment did not reveal any significant difference across the two groups. However the stressful life events differed significantly (t = 14.4, df 204; p<0.001). Table II gives the details of the results.

TABLE II:

COMPARISON OF LOCUS OF CONTROL (LOC) & LIFE EVENTS (LE) IN USERS & NONUSERS.

	USERS (n=85) mean (SD)	NONUSERS (n=121) mean(SD)	t	p
LOC	8.8(2.5)	9.4(2.1)	1.09	NS
LE	164.2(41.8)	100.7(20.5)	14.4	<0.001

A further analysis of difference in the users life events and locus of control scores with regards to age and sex distribution revealed that the older age group users (35-50 yrs) experienced significantly more stressful life events. (Table III)

TABLE III:

SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERECE IN LOCUS OF CONTROL (LOC) & LIFE EVENTS (LE) IN USERS CATEGORISED ACCORDING TO AGE AND SEX

	LE mean(SD)	t	p	LOC mean(SD)	t	p
Sex						
male	172.1(51.1)	1.84	NS	9.1(2.5)	0.55	NS
female	155.6 (26.6)			8.4(2.5)		
Age						
20-34	148.9(27.4)	3.54	<0.001	9.3(2.2)	1.68	NS
35-50	179.1(47.8)			8.35(2.8)		

DISCUSSION

This investigation was carried out with the aim of 1. finding out the prevalance of the drug use in a rural community of Bihar and 2. to study the relation of the drug use to some psychosocial factors viz, life events and the locus of control in the drug users. The choice of the village was guided by the fact that it was close from the Institute and the members of the locality could be easily contacted. It was considered to be representing the area of Chotanagpur though the results cannot be generalised to the state as such.

The results indicate that the overall rate of drug use was 28.8%. The studies from other parts of the country consisting of rural population have reported similar rates. Mohan et al (1981) reported the rate of 28.1% in rural areas of Punjab. Shulka(1979) reported that 38.3% of the rural population in Uttar Pradesh to be habitual users. Thus a similar trend in drug use is discernible in our sample. It was also noted that the user was frequently a male from a lower caste, a younger age group and less educated. Results on similar lines have been reported by Shukla (1979). Alcohol was the most commonly used substance. All the 334 users in the current sample were users of alcohol. Cannabis use also occured frequently. There was however a very low use of opium. There was no use of harder drugs like heroin. The use of alcohol and cannabis can be because of the fact that they are easily available and there seem

to be a subcultural sanction especially for alcohol and also for cannabis in some circles and on some occassions.

In understanding the psychosocial correlates of the drug use it becomes apparent that the users and the nonusers do not differ on the parameters assesed. The results regarding psychosocial variables have to be interpreted cautiously as the subsamples included only those subjects who gave their consent and hence need not be representative of the categories. There is however an increase in stressful life events in the category of drug users in the year prior to the onset. This has been noted by other workers especially in the cases of relapase back to the drug use. We cannot say however that our sample is in any way comparable to the other studies because of the differences in the set-up. Our study is a community based study whereas the other studies have subjects who have a more serious problem with drug use. The interpretation is further confounded by the issue of the cause effect relationship between the stressful life events and drug use. The present study made no attepmt to evaluate the relationship. In the present study there were more stressful life events in the sibjects belonging to the older age group in the users category. This could reflect a higher vulnerability of the older population to resort to drug use when faced with stressors.

The research in relation to the locus of control in drug users has shown conflicting results. In our study did not seem to be any significant relation between the internal or external orientation and the use of drugs in the particular community.

In conclusion the present study defines the pattern of drug use in a particular village with mixed population in the Chotanagpur area of Bihar. Alcohol appears to be the most commonly used mood-altering substance followed by cannabis. Stressful life events appear to be related to the drug use whereas locus of control does not differentiate users from non users.

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