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Personality Dimensions And Stress Impacting Young Male Substance Abusers Of Punjab

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Abstract : Substance abuse among young males is a complex and pervasive issue that extends beyond the physical aspects of addiction. One often-overlooked dimension is its profound impact on the personalities of these individuals. The experience of substance abuse during the formative years of adolescence and young adulthood can induce significant alterations in their personality traits and behaviors. The quest to understand the extent and nature of these personality changes among young male substance abusers is an imperative one, as it can shed light on the underlying psychological processes and guide the development of more effective interventions and treatment strategies.

Key words: Personality, stress, drug abuse, adolescence.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of personality has long captivated the curiosity of psychologists, researchers, and individuals seeking self-awareness. Personality encompasses the unique set of characteristics, traits, and patterns of behavior that define an individual. It is not only a central element of human identity but also a key factor influencing one's thoughts, emotions, and actions. Understanding personality involves unraveling the intricate interplay of genetic, environmental, and situational factors that shape who we are. This exploration of personality has been a subject of extensive research, yielding valuable insights into its nature, development, and impact on various aspects of life. This article provides an overview of the impact of personality and stress on young male substance abusers, along with relevant citations and references for further exploration of the topic.

Erosion of Values and the Challenge of Drug Abuse in Punjab, India

Punjab, often called the "Land of Five Rivers," is known for its rich cultural heritage, traditional values, and a resilient spirit. However, in recent years, it has gained notoriety for a different reason – the prevalence of drug abuse. This crisis not only threatens the physical health of its citizens but also poses a severe challenge to the moral and ethical fabric of Punjabi society.

The erosion of values in Punjab is a complex issue, intertwined with the drug abuse problem. Young people, in particular, have been vulnerable to the lure of drugs, often falling prey to peer pressure, economic disparities, and a sense of hopelessness. In this environment, values such as discipline, family bonds, and community solidarity have suffered.

The Punjab drug crisis reflects an alarming deviation from the traditional Punjabi values of hard work, integrity, and social cohesion. It is essential to recognize that addressing drug abuse in Punjab goes hand in hand with the restoration of these values.

These above mentioned erudition provide insights into the drug abuse crisis in Punjab and its impact on the erosion of values in the region. Addressing this complex issue requires a multifaceted approach involving healthcare, education, community engagement, and policy changes.

Young male substance abusers often experience significant impacts on both their personality and stress levels. Substance abuse can alter their personality traits, leading to changes in behavior and emotional responses. Additionally, it contributes to heightened stress due to addiction-related pressures and life challenges. These changes can influence their ability to cope with stressors effectively. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for tailored intervention and support.

Personality Impact Substance abuse can lead to alterations in personality traits, including increased impulsivity, decreased conscientiousness, and greater neuroticism. [Kotov et al., 2017]

Stress Impact Young male substance abusers face elevated stress levels, stemming from addiction-related stressors such as withdrawal symptoms, social stigma, financial difficulties, and legal issues. These stressors can exacerbate their addiction and hinder recovery efforts. [Brady & Sinha, 2005; Stewart & Conrod, 2008]

Combating Substance Abuse Among Young Males: Evidence-Based Strategies

Substance abuse among young males is a pressing public health issue that demands effective intervention strategies. Evidence-based approaches can play a pivotal role in preventing substance abuse and aiding recovery. Here are some strategies with actual citations and references:

1. Prevention through Education

- School-based prevention programs, such as the Life Skills Training (LST) program, have shown success in reducing substance abuse among youth. These programs provide information on the risks associated with substance use and teach essential life skills. [Botvin, G. J., et al. (2000)]

2. Early Intervention and Screening

- Early identification of substance abuse and intervention, such as Brief Motivational Interventions (BMI), can be effective. BMIs aim to increase motivation for change and have been found to be particularly useful for young adults. [D'Amico, E. J., et al. (2016)].

3. Mental Health Integration

- Integrated treatment that addresses co-occurring mental health disorders alongside substance abuse is vital. The Integrated Dual Disorder Treatment (IDDT) model has proven effective in this context. Mueser, K. T., & Gingerich, S. (2006).

4. Peer Support and Group Therapy

- Group therapy and peer support programs, like 12-Step facilitation, can provide a sense of community and shared experience, aiding recovery. Humphreys, K., & Moos, R. H. (2001).

5. Family-Based Interventions

- Family-based interventions, such as Multidimensional Family Therapy (MDFT), can be effective in addressing substance abuse in young males. These interventions engage the entire family to support recovery. Liddle, H. A. (2002).

These strategies offer a multifaceted approach to combat substance abuse among young males, addressing prevention, early intervention, and comprehensive treatment. It's essential to tailor interventions to the individual's specific needs and circumstances for the best outcomes.

Certain tests have proven their psychometric sturdity over a period of time. Lets have a look at these two tests which are elucidated here.

The Big Five Inventory (BFI): A Comprehensive Exploration of Personality Traits

The Big Five Inventory (BFI) is a widely used and well-regarded tool in the field of psychology, offering a comprehensive framework for understanding personality. Developed to assess the "Big Five" personality traits, it has become a cornerstone of personality research and has found applications in various domains, including clinical psychology, organizational behavior, and even popular culture.

The Big Five personality traits, often referred to as the Five Factor Model (FFM), represent five overarching dimensions that capture the breadth of human personality:

- 1. Openness to Experience:** This trait reflects an individual's curiosity, creativity, and willingness to explore new ideas and experiences. High scorers tend to be open-minded, imaginative, and adventurous.
- 2. Conscientiousness:** Conscientious individuals are organized, responsible, and goal-oriented. They show high levels of self-discipline, reliability, and attention to detail.
- 3. Extraversion:** Extraversion describes the degree of sociability and assertiveness in a person. High scorers are typically outgoing, talkative, and enjoy social interactions.
- 4. Agreeableness:** Individuals high in agreeableness tend to be compassionate, cooperative, and concerned about the welfare of others. They value harmonious relationships and are often described as warm-hearted.
- 5. Neuroticism (or Emotional Stability):** This trait pertains to an individual's emotional stability. Those with high neuroticism may experience more negative emotions and heightened emotional reactivity, while those with low neuroticism tend to be emotionally stable and resilient.

The BFI is a self-report questionnaire consisting of a series of items that participants rate based on their own behaviors and feelings. Responses to these items are used to generate scores for each of the five personality traits, providing a quantitative assessment of an individual's personality profile.

The Big Five Inventory has greatly contributed to our understanding of human personality, facilitating research in diverse fields and providing a valuable tool for assessing and comparing personality traits across individuals.

Perceived Stress Scale (PSS): Measuring the Subjective Experience of Stress

The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) is a widely used instrument in psychology and related fields to assess an individual's perception of stress in their life. Developed by Sheldon Cohen and his colleagues in 1983, the PSS aims to capture not only the presence of stressors but, more importantly, how individuals perceive and appraise the stressors they encounter.

The PSS typically consists of a series of questions, which individuals rate based on how often they have experienced certain thoughts and feelings over a defined period, such as the past month. The scale measures the degree to which individuals find their lives unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overloaded. It explores the perceived unpredictability and uncontrollability of events, which are key aspects of the stress experience.

The PSS is valuable in research and clinical practice for several reasons:

1. **Subjective Stress Assessment:** It focuses on the individual's perception of stress, which is often a more accurate reflection of their actual stress experience compared to objective measures.
2. **Versatile Application:** The PSS is applicable across various populations and contexts, making it a versatile tool for studying stress in different settings.
3. **Early Intervention:** It can identify individuals experiencing high levels of perceived stress, which can be a precursor to more severe mental health issues.
4. **Research and Clinical Use:** The PSS has been widely employed in studies related to stress, health, and well-being, and it is also useful in clinical assessments.

The PSS has been adapted into different versions, including the original PSS-10 and the PSS-14, depending on the number of items included. Researchers and clinicians can choose the version that best suits their needs.

The Perceived Stress Scale is a valuable tool in the field of stress research and psychological assessment, enabling a better understanding of how individuals perceive and respond to stress in their lives. It has been widely used to explore the relationship between perceived stress and various health and psychological outcomes.

To Conclude

Good studies need to be done and committed research work needs to be undertaken at various levels targeting the youth of our country, especially in Panjab where drug abuse is very rampant. The present paper serves to highlight the importance of this endeavor at all levels globally too.

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