



RETHINKING FAMILY SUPPORT IN ADDICTION RECOVERY

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Abstract: Addiction is a complex taboo disease that affects the brain's chemistry and functioning, leading to devastating physical and mental health consequences if left untreated. Building a strong support system (Acosta et al., 2022) is crucial for individuals battling addiction, including family, friends, and the community. Family members can offer stability and understanding during challenging times, while friends (Tracy et al., 2016) can provide motivation and companionship. This article has explored and provided insights into the importance of a robust support network in the recovery process essential for long-term sobriety.

The study focuses on the case of four drug dependents whose family members have discovered their addiction and have resorted to numerous ways to remedy. The primary data gathered was fortified through direct observation, empirical learning, and a thorough review of existing literature. The objectives are to study the role and need of family support in overcoming drug addiction and recommend ways to minimize drug use.

Supported by the data findings, this study emphasizes the importance of recognizing early signs of drug abuse and dependency in family members, educating the care giver and enablers, considering the socialization process, and partaking in awareness programs.

Index Terms- Addiction Recovery, Arunachal Pradesh, Drug Addiction, Family Support, Social Worker, Support System Theory

I. INTRODUCTION

Addiction is not a choice, but rather a complex disease that alters the brain's chemistry and functioning (Leshner, 1997). It is characterized by compulsive drug or alcohol use despite negative consequences. Addiction progresses through various stages, starting with experimentation and occasional use, leading to regular use, dependence, and ultimately addiction. Each stage is marked by an increasing loss of control over substance use and an intensifying craving for the substance. As addiction progresses, individuals experience significant physical and mental health consequences. Substance abuse takes a toll on the body, leading to deterioration of vital organs, impaired immune function, and increased vulnerability to diseases (Szalavitz et al., 2021). Moreover, addiction often co-occurs with mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder, exacerbating the overall impact on an individual's well-being. Family members can offer stability and understanding during challenging times. They can participate in family therapy sessions, attend support groups, and educate themselves about addiction to better support their loved one's recovery.

This study focuses on understanding how drug addiction has been progressively detrimental to the health of the 04 (four) cases by probing the significance of building a strong support system primarily consisting of family members, that is essential in the road to recovery (Bhattacharya et al., 2013). Findings of the study suggest that by embracing diversity in family structures and recognizing their importance, individuals battling addiction can find the support they need to overcome this challenging disease.

II. Theoretical Approach: The Support System Theory

Drug dependency has been a major problem in society for decades. It affects not only the addict but also their families, friends, and the community. In recent years, there has been a shift in how drug dependence is being addressed. Rather than focusing solely on the individual addict, the support system theory has gained popularity as a more holistic approach to treating drug dependency. This article will explore this theory and its application in treating drug dependents. The support system theory posits that individuals are not isolated beings but are part of a larger social system. This system includes family, friends, coworkers, and the community at large (Farrell & Barnes, 1993). According to the theory, an individual's behavior is not solely a result of their personal characteristics, but also influenced by the people around them and the environment they are in. This theory has become increasingly relevant in the treatment of drug dependents. When treating drug dependence, this theory emphasizes the importance of involving the addict's support system in the treatment process. The family can provide emotional and practical support to the addict, help them navigate difficult situations, and provide accountability.

Drug dependency can be a lonely and isolating experience, and having a supportive network can help the addict feel less alone. The support system can also provide practical support, such as helping the addict find employment or housing. This can help the addict by providing a safe and supportive environment. This can include creating a drug-free home environment and helping the addict find social activities that do not involve drug use. Another benefit of involving the support system in the treatment process is that it can provide

accountability. When the addict's loved ones are involved in the treatment process, they can help keep the addict on track and hold them accountable for their actions. This can be particularly important during the early stages of recovery when the addict may be more vulnerable to relapse. The support system can also help the addict identify any triggers that may lead to drug use and develop strategies to avoid them and can provide encouragement, celebrate milestones, and be a source of motivation when the going gets tough.

III. Materials and Method

A collective case study of four drug dependents who are under rehabilitation in various centres of the state served as the focus. This type of study comprises several cases in order to inspect a "phenomenon, population, or general condition" (Stake, 2000). In this study, the researcher looked both at the client's individual trust with drugs as well as the combined experiences they all shared. The selection of the clients was made based on three criteria viz.:

- i. Those whose family members were aware of the client's addiction.
- ii. Researcher's accessibility to the client.

The primary data gathered through the case studies has been fortified through direct observation and empirical learning of the authors as well as thorough review of existing literature pertaining to the universe of the study that included official record of the rehab centers, newspaper articles and governmental archives. Observations were made upon their interaction with family members during periodic visits. To maintain uniformity in documentation, select questions have been taken out from the transcripts of each recorded interview. Clarity and accuracy have been ensured by making these notes available to the clients for their review and satisfaction. The treatment and case study of these clients are still underway and only exclusive data has been taken into consideration for the purpose of the paper at hand.

IV. Research Objectives

1. To study the role of family support in overcoming drug addiction.
2. To establish the need for a robust family support system in addiction recovery.

V. Profile

Case I

Tama is a 25-year-old male from Arunachal Pradesh. His uncle, Akhup, suggested that he see a psychiatrist to investigate his solitary confinement, social withdrawal, and lack of verbal communication. Tama's biopsychosocial instability was thought to be the result of drug use, according to the client's uncle. Tama preferred to spend her time alone and was socially withdrawn. She had few friends. When rumours of unrequited love swirled around him in the ninth grade, his poor verbal communication skills became clear. He has gone missing from the dorms at the school numerous times over days.

The client's family includes a mother who has had a mental illness since she was a child, a father who worked as a storekeeper until his death in 2000, and a younger brother who is currently enrolled in the X standard at school. Although Tama's uncle doesn't have much knowledge of his early years, he affirms that Tama has

always preferred to keep to himself and has exhibited a strong introverted nature since a very young age. His uncle thinks Tama may have used drugs, which is why his biopsychosocial instability is happening.

Case II

Mezar, a 49-year-old man, was arrested for drug trafficking in accordance with the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985. His antisocial behavior, lack of social responsibility, living as a trans person, and deviant lifestyle were the causes of his biopsychosocial instability. He had a substance use disorder, no interest in social activities, no regard for his family, a junky attitude, poor hygiene, and cancer from injecting drugs. After the death of his wife, mother, and parents, as well as the marriage of his daughter, the client was left living alone. Hepatitis-C and depression have been tentatively identified in him.

The client's severe physical and psychological dependence caused him to struggle with family relationships, poverty, and his physical and mental health. He has finished the detoxification process and is continuing with his regular activities at the rehab facility. Professionals have affirmed his progress through follow-ups and regular sessions.

Despite being aware of Mezar's addiction, his family members initially noticed a sudden change in his routine and behavior. They all had different reactions; some were shocked, while others were angry. A few people stopped talking to him and avoided him. He initially felt a deep sense of shame, but he eventually grew accustomed to it. But because he frequently fled, their attempts to treat his drug addiction were ineffective. He thinks his parents should talk to him in a loving and open way, emphasizing his feelings and expressing their care, love, and attention.

Case III

Temin, a 23-year-old male, was referred to a rehab facility by his father, Rokim, as a result of his increasingly antisocial behavior. His signs included physical withdrawal, indifference, lack of social interaction, and poor personal hygiene. A decline in academic performance, social isolation, and failure to maintain social connections were all biopsychosocial consequences. Temin grew up in a household where his mother was a businesswoman and his father was a contractor. It was tentatively determined that the patient had hepatitis-C, an illness brought on by intravenous drug abuse (IVDA). Because of the client's extreme physical and psychological dependence, she had trouble forming relationships, motivating herself, and functioning in social situations. Her physical health also began to deteriorate. He received appropriate care at the rehab facility, giving him the opportunity to advance in his journey toward recovery.

Through interventional strategies like motivational therapy, counseling, group therapy, meditation, indoor and outdoor games, dance & singing, and spiritual sessions, the researcher aimed to aid Temin in recovering from substance use disorder (SUD). Initially, the client battled feelings of guilt and shame, which resulted in anxiety and depression. However, since his admission 8 months ago, he has been leading a sober life. Temin's family was aware of his addiction, but because of his selfishness and lack of empathy, they had no hope. Temin received effective treatment, but his lack of seriousness led to a relapse. To understand the person's feelings

and to support them in overcoming and recovering from addiction, family members should receive education about addiction.

Case IV

Due to his compulsive behavior of robbing his family of money due to substance use disorder (SUD), Goku, a 20-year-old male, was referred to a rehab facility. The reason for his lack of interest in social life, academic failure, and poor psychological health was determined to be his biopsychosocial instability. His symptoms included a lack of interest in social activities, the inability to maintain relationships, poor hygiene, Hepatitis-C, and an outstanding debt of one lakh rupees from the purchase of drugs. Biopsychosocial effects included a lack of participation in social activities, a failure to fulfill social obligations, and a lack of social support on the weekends. His mother who worked as a government employee supported the family. Hepatitis-C and depression have been prognostically determined in him. His severe physical and mental dependency resulted in poor social functioning, family relationships, and physical health. Among other interventional strategies, the researcher aimed to assist the client in understanding the value of education, lifestyle, and role in society.

Goku's family is aware of his addiction, and while cleaning his room, they discovered the drug and injection. The family's initial response was shock, which was followed by a total breakdown and finally, tears. Goku became so emotionally numb that he began to concentrate on his own feelings rather than his family's sobs. His family immediately sent him for treatment in order to deal with his drug addiction. The therapy has been successful in giving Goku a more realistic and expansive perspective on his life. He is confident that his family will support him in his battle to overcome addiction.

VI. Findings and Discussion

The data indicates that the family was unaware of the client's drug use, leading to them going to great lengths to hide it. They would demand money from family members to buy drugs, then steal cash or other items to sell them. They would lie and make deceitful excuses to avoid detection. The clients would often bring drugs home and use them in confinement. They were caught very late into their addiction through discovery of the substances and injection in their bedrooms. The clients started using drugs under the influence of friends, to avoid problems in the family environment. The family members were shocked and disappointed upon discovering their addiction. They tried to scold them and conduct meetings to educate them about the negative effects of drug use, but the clients ignored these calls. Some clients were even beaten to keep them away from peddlers and drug-using peers. As withdrawal symptoms worsened, the clients changed their tactics and sought help from clinical professionals. When the problems persisted, the clients were admitted to a rehabilitation facility.

The treatment proved to be effective, but due to the client's lack of seriousness, they often relapsed. The clients believed that their family members should communicate with them in a kind and open manner, emphasizing their concern, love, and attention, rather than becoming angry or scolding them. They also emphasized that the family members should be made aware of addiction and understand their feelings, as they

need help to fight and recover from it. In their recovering journey, they expressed that their family's step in treating the problem of addiction has been the most effective, as it has helped them gain a better perspective on their life and the long-term effects of their addiction. The clients believe that their family will stand by them in their fight against addiction.

VII. Recommendation

7.1 Identification of early signs of abuse and dependency

The study revealed that family members only became aware of the addiction when they found solid proof such as injections or substances in the possession of the individuals. This highlights the importance of recognizing the early indicators of drug abuse in your child or any other relative. The saying "prevention is better than cure" emphasizes that taking preventive measures is always a wiser decision than relying on treatments. It is relatively easier to manage the early stages and initial signs of drug inclination, a child's interest in experimentation, and their attempts rather than dealing with its consequences later.

7.2 Family Education

The data from this study has confirmed the importance of family support. However, it has also revealed that family members, in nearly every case, were unable to provide adequate care and solutions to the problem at hand. Instead, they often resorted to harmful techniques such as confinement, shaming, and physical abuse, which have proven to be detrimental to their health in the long term. It

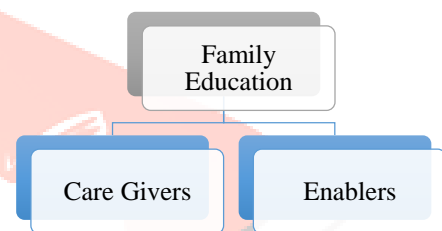


Fig.4. stakeholders in the family

becomes clear that educating various participants within the family structure is essential in comprehending drug abuse and effective methods of dealing with it. The family unit can be divided into two main categories: a) Care Givers and b) Enablers. Care Givers are directly responsible for taking care of individuals living with addiction and activities could consist of attending to basic needs like acquiring food, clothing, shelter, and covering other social expenses. Conversely, enablers are individuals who consciously or unconsciously foster the tendency to seek drugs among others. These individuals prevent drug users from confronting the true reality of their situation and greatly contribute to the severity of the problem. Therefore, it is crucial to educate both groups of people on effective coping strategies in order to address the issue of drug abuse.

7.3 Reconsidering the socialization process

During the socialization process, individuals acquire knowledge about household and community customs and practices. This process involves the transfer of both desirable and undesirable behaviours from one generation to another. Unfortunately, harmful practices like alcohol consumption are also passed down. Alcohol, being one of the oldest substances known to humanity, is prevalent in various societies worldwide. Observing the older individuals in the family participating in the process of making and consuming alcohol and other substances creates a sense of normality for the child. They view these actions as a regular part of

life and may not experience fear or guilt when it comes to experimenting with other dangerous substances later. The case studies reveal that these clients typically grew up witnessing their fathers, mothers, and other relatives engage in alcohol consumption, smoking locally prepared marijuana, and other similar behaviours. Hence, this study propose that society should reconsider the way it normalizes drug consumption and reduce its exposure to ensure a healthier environment for the younger generation and advocate for a shift away from the cultural and traditional promotion of drug use.

7.4 Partaking in awareness programmes

Awareness campaigns are essential for educating both enablers and caregivers in the family. Therefore, it is crucial that they occasionally take part in these types of community initiatives that are organized by civil society and governmental organizations. Many times, by listening to experts and resource people, you can learn things that you cannot learn through close relationships. Awareness campaigns might teach participants how to spot risks, administer first aid, contact a rehab center, etc. These programs will arm the family members with the knowledge they need to handle unpleasant situations at home.

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