Assessing the Factors Contributing to Drug Use and Their Implications for University Students' Academic and Social lives in Pakistan

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Article information	ABSTRACT
	This study looks at the root causes of drug usage among Pakistani university students in Lahore and assesses the effects it has on their social and academic lives. The study also attempts to determine risk factors for drug abuse and provide suggestions for successful intervention techniques. Four public universities in Lahore received a total of 250 questionnaires, of which 207 completed responses were analyzed. Data was collected through a survey questionnaire administered both online and on paper. The analysis was conducted using SPSS, focusing on specialized tables, cross-tabulations, and descriptive statistics. The substances most frequently misused included prescription medications, tobacco, and marijuana. Key risk factors identified were curiosity, peer pressure, stress management, and the belief that drugs enhance social life. Curiosity emerged as the primary reason for initiating drug use across all types. Peer influence played a significant role in the misuse of cocaine, marijuana, and tobacco, while stress relief was a major factor in the misuse of prescription medications. Drug use was found to negatively impact academic performance, with individuals reporting challenges in completing tasks, lower attendance, and reduced concentration. Additionally, drug use strained relationships with non-users, resulting in decreased interactions and heightened discomfort among non-users in social settings.

Indroduction

A maladaptive pattern of substance uses that results in clinically substantial impairment or discomfort is referred to as substance abuse. The individual can also experience withdrawal symptoms and tolerance (Gelder, Mayou & Cowen, 2006). Substance is abuse is a global issue. It is estimated that 35 million people all over the world suffer from drug use disorders and are in dire need of treatment services (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2019). According to the latest report by United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2024), Drug miss use has increased to 292 million individuals in 2022, states indicating a 20% increase in just ten years. Around 228 million users globally, cannabis is the most often abused drug, opioids are consumed by 60 million users, amphetamines by 30 million users, ecstasy (20 million users), and cocaine (23 million). World deluged by Drugs abuse, Pakistan with population of 235 million is hardly an exception. The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), Pakistan's Ministry of Narcotics Control, and other national partners collaborated with the UNODC in 2012 and 2013 with a goal to investigate a demographic profile in Pakistan to determine the number of drug users and their usage pattern and habits. The report came to a conclusion that the number of drug abusers are 6.7 million, of whom 4.25 million are drug dependent in Pakistan and require long-term residential treatment programs (UNODC, 2013). According to recent report there a significant change in the drug use trends in the region, particularly anecdotal evidence of a mighty growth in the use of synthetic narcotics such as methamphetamines (UNODC, 2024). Despite these terrible figures, there is a significant absence of preventive measures and drug prosecution procedures. Moreover, as one study by a researcher indicates that Pakistan is one of the world's most drug-affected countries, with an alarming incidence of 40,000 new addicts per year. Drug usage is on its peak, and this can have disastrous effects on a nation like Pakistan, whose youth (those under 30) account for a significant 64% of the population (Ghazal, 2019). Any country's most important asset for growth and prosperity is its youth. Sometimes, as a result of neglect and absence of proper measures to utilize this valuable resource, they engage in criminal activity, such as drug use in educational institution, which puts progressive and productive youngsters at a disadvantage (Ahmed, Yousaf, Saud, & Ahmad, 2020). During a news conference in December 2018, the Pakistani Government's Minister of State for Interior declared that over 50% of students in educational institutions located in Islamabad, the country's capital, were involved in drug abuse indicating valuable youth at risk. The Minister also issued an order to combat the drug mafia (Sabri, 2018). Teenagers in particular are more prone towards drug addiction due to their natural curiosity, peer pressure, and the companionship and lifestyles of other addicts (Hamilton, Mann, & Noh, 2010). Research establishes a strong relation between epidemiology of drugs and cultural values in a society. The prevalence of drug addiction in any civilization appears to be subjugated by cultural norms, attitudes toward drug use, and values—all of which vary greatly among countries, societies, ethnicities, as well as geographical areas. Hence generalizing the findings about the variables linked to drug addiction from one culture to another is a very challenging task one that can be considered impossible. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the characteristics of that civilization in addition to the etiology of drug issues in that culture (Emmanuel, Akhtar & Rahbar, 2003). According to the report, drug usage has grown to be a significant problem for this group, pointing to a worrying trend of rising substance misuse. Effects of miss using drugs doesn't only disturb social lives but it also has a detrimental impact on pupils' academic performance and lead to their engagement in criminal activities. Drug abusers take drugs to cope with their emotions, feel more mature, avoid pain, improve their relationships with others, and boost their low self-esteem (Donald et al., 1987). Another Research shows that drug usage at a young age can cause a range of problems later in life, such as struggling to achieve school requirements, dropping out of

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school, being dependent on drugs, becoming unemployed, and so on. Additionally, it causes a decrease in enthusiasm for social and relational opportunities, which culminates in legal issues (Gordon et al., 2004). The current study is carried in four public universities of Lahore to find out why students in academic institution abuse drugs and what are the predisposing factors leading to drug abuse in Pakistan particularly in universities. Moreover, the study is aimed to investigate impact of drugs on academic performance of students. Another major construct of the paper is to examine impact of drugs on social life of students (Ahmed et al., 2021). Failure to address this issue damages young people's health and negatively impacts their socioeconomic development of country as a whole.

Literature Review

Although, there is a conspicuous lack of literature on the influence of drug misuse on academic performance and social life of students in Pakistan. However, studies exist that provides valuable insights regarding drug abuse among youth and students. One study conducted in Islamabad rehabilitation center showed alarming results, among 102 male participants 14% were less than 20 years old among which most were skilled with secondary education. A significant portion started drug abuse during their teenage years, and 8% were students. Heroin and cannabis were the most abused substances. Causes for initiation included family disputes and peer pressure, and 46% reported comorbid depression (Ghazal, 2019). Study of (Shafiq et.al) indicated that alcohol is widely consumed by various sections of the society, most notably by the very tributary and the impoverished. Studies on the causes and risk factors of drug use have demonstrated that addiction may be thought of as a basic biological illness (Leshner, 1997). A notable increase in drug addiction among Pakistani university students was brought to light by Khattak (2012). According to the report, drug usage has grown to be a significant problem for this group, pointing to a worrying trend of rising substance misuse. As indicated earlier In Pakistan, youth comprise almost 60% of the population, with the average

age of university students falling between 15 and 30 years old. Between 25% and 44% of students said they regularly used alcohol and other illegal substances (Gopang, Siyal, & Umrani, 2022). According to a different study, some college students used drugs even before they enrolled, suggesting that not all of them developed drug addictions in university moreover, one of the most important and fundamental socialization agents that is essential to a child's upbringing is their family. A youngster who witnesses a family member using drugs attempts to emulate the behavior and eventually develops an addiction (Masood, 1979). The ease access to drugs may be the cause of the rising trend of drug addiction among college students. Adopting new behaviors is greatly influenced by the environment, especially for young individuals. Young kids have the impulse to use drugs on their own when they witness a close friend or neighbor using them, which leads to their eventual addiction (kuria, 1996). Research that has been published suggests that although parents and peers have separate effects on a student's substance use, peers have a much bigger impact than family members (Kandel & Davies 1996; Needle et al. 1986). The finding of (Zaman et al., 2015) showed that drug misuse was more prevalent among students attending private universities as a result of missed chances. Students who were male were proven to be more violent than women. Substance misuse had a significant impact on pupils' socioeconomic standing. Study of (Shafiq et.al) indicates that Medical students at the undergraduate level lack sufficient knowledge on the effects and adverse effects of popular substances of abuse. Similar study is conducted in Bangladesh by (Sujan, Tasnim, Hossain, Sikder, & Hasan, 2020) concluding that there is significant negative impact of drug abuse on academic performance of university students. According to another survey, substance addiction has a big influence on university students' day-to-day life. It concludes that drugs are easily obtained on campuses, frequently as a result of low resistance, the participation of seasoned students, and different organizations that provide drugs to newcomers. This problem is exacerbated by ineffective oversight and sporadic worker

involvement. Furthermore, students themselves occasionally distribute drugs. The media and other factors also contribute to the promotion of drug usage. The study emphasizes the serious dangers of drug addiction in young people as well as the possible long-term effects Ahmad et al., 2020).

Hence, to our knowledge there is no such study in Pakistan that primary focus on impact of drugs on universities students' academic performance and their social lives. Therefore, it is imperative to investigate the causes of drug addiction and how it affects students' social and academic lives for a number of reasons. Comprehending these variables can aid in pinpointing pivotal circumstances and susceptibilities that foster substance usage among kids. Developing focused preventative and intervention methods requires the use of such knowledge. A clearer picture of the wider ramifications can be obtained by examining how drug addiction affects social interactions and academic performance. This will highlight the ways in which substance abuse jeopardizes personal relationships and academic successes. This information is essential for developing efficient support networks within educational settings and putting into practice laws that deal with the underlying causes of drug addiction as well as its consequences. The current paper provides a thorough overlook into all those factors that prompts students in universities to abuse drugs. This research can direct initiatives to enhance academic performance and student well-being while reducing the harmful effects of drug use.

Study Design

Research Questions

*Primary Question***:** This study seeks to understand why students in Pakistani universities engage in drug abuse. What are the key factors that predispose university students to drug abuse? Specifically, we aim to uncover the underlying reasons for this behavior in academic settings

*Secondary Questions***:** How does drug abuse affect students' academic performance and social interactions?

Participants

Sample Size and Selection: We distributed 250 questionnaires to students from several public universities in Lahore. This number of participants were chosen in order to ensure that we gathered a robust amount of data that could give us meaningful insights into drug abuse trends and relationships. To select participants, we used purposive sampling to target those who are known to the researchers and their friends as drug abusers, complemented by a snowball sampling technique to reach additional participants through referrals. From distributed amount of 250 questionnaires, we received 207 completed responses. This approach was intended to provide a comprehensive view of drug abuse among university students in Pakistan specifically in Lahore.

Data Collection

*Method***:** For data collection both online and printed survey document was administered in order to get ensure maximum numbers of participants. For participant's ease, students were offered a choice between completing the survey electronically or on paper, depending on what was most convenient for them.

Procedure: The questionnaires was distributed among students using purposive sampling, focusing on those who are actively engaged in drug use, and then used snowball sampling to expand our reach. Participants were briefed on the purpose of our study and assured of the confidentiality of their responses. The data collection process was straightforward and respectful of participant's time and privacy as they were given option to choose as it seems convenient for them in regards of time and no record of participant identity was kept.

Instruments

Questionnaire: The primary data collection tool was a structured questionnaire. It contained a mix of question types, including: *Likert Scale Questions:* To determine the degree of agreement or disagreement with different claims on drug misuse and its effects. *Demographic Questions:*

Demographics were included to collect background information such as age, gender, and academic status demographics were included. *Binary Questions***:** (Yes/No) to determine the presence or absence of certain behaviors or experiences. *Multiple-Choice Questions:* (Check all that apply) in order to identify common reasons for drug use and other relevant factors among participants.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), which is an excellent tool for managing large, complicated data sets and carrying out in-depth statistical analysis. The analysis included: *Custom Tables:* custom tables were made to consolidate and present data in a clear, meaningful way. *Cross-Tabulations***:** cross tabulations were performed to explore relationships between different variables, such as drug use patterns and demographic factors. *Descriptive Statistics:* To summarize the data means, percentages and standard deviations were used, providing a snapshot of the overall trends and patterns.

Ethical Considerations

Before filling out our questionnaire, all students were provided with detailed information about the study's purpose, objectives, procedures, processes and their rights. They were informed that participation was voluntary and that they could deny to participate at any time without any consequences. Their consent was acquired before they filled out the questionnaire. We took extensive measures to protect participants' privacy. Responses were anonymized, and personal identifiers were removed from the data. All collected data were stored securely to prevent unauthorized access, and only aggregate results were reported to ensure individual confidentiality. The study adhered to ethical standards for research involving human subjects. Ethical approval was sought and granted from the relevant review board to ensure the research was conducted responsibly and ethically.

Findings

250 questionnaires were distributed among drug abusers using snow ball sampling out of which 207 were received filled with a response rate of 82.8%. Age ranged from 18 to 28 having mean age of 22.36. The mean age of our participants is somewhat higher than the median age, indicating a minor positive skew in their age distribution. This suggests that the sample is dominated by younger participants. Hence suggesting that the prevalence of drugs in university is higher among younger students. Other demographics are given in the table 1.1

The frequencies and percentages of different medications that research participants abused are displayed in the table 1.2. The most often misused substance was tobacco, which was reported by 158 individuals 77.1% of the cases. 109 individuals 53.2% of the cases, reported using marijuana. Twenty-five percent of the cases, or 42 participants reported using alcohol. Thirty-seven percent of the cases, or 63 participants utilized prescription medicines. Of the cases, 29.3%, or 60 people misused cocaine. Of the cases, 51 participants reported using heroin, making up 24.9% of the total. Of the instances, 15 Individuals (2.9%), or 7.3%, abused methamphetamine. The least often abused substance was hallucinogens, as indicated by 11 persons 5.4% of the sample.

Table1: *Demographic information of the participation*

		Count
Age	21-23	97
	24-26	47
	26 or older	15
	Under 18	6
	18-20	42
	Total	207
Gender	Female	63
	Male	144
	Total	207
Year of study	First year	28
	Second year	47
	Third year	36
	Fourth year	67
	Graduate	12
	Postgraduate	12
	Total	207
Field of study	Arts/ Humanities	36
	Engineering	40
	Medical	27
	Natural sciences	44
	Social sciences	60
	Total	207
living situation	Alone	29
	At home with family	24
	Campus/ University hostel	101
	Off campus with roommates or friends	53
	Total	207

Predisposing Factors

The survey conducted among university students identified several key factors that contribute to the initiation of drug use. The analysis focused on four primary reasons: curiosity about the effects of drugs, peer pressure, coping with stress or anxiety, and the belief that drug use would enhance social life. Each of these factors was analyzed in relation to the consumption of eight specific drugs: alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, prescription drugs, cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, and hallucinogens. Statistical data is presented in table 1.3

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Table 2: *Frequency of usage of drugs*

	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Alcohol	42	8.3%	20.5%
Tobacco	158	31.0%	77.1%
Marijuana	109	21.4%	53.2%
Prescribe drugs	63	12.4%	30.7%
Cocaine	60	11.8%	29.3%
Heroine	51	10.0%	24.9%
Methamphetamine	15	2.9%	7.3%
Hallucinogens	11	2.2%	5.4%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 2.

Curiosity was found to be a major factor in the initial use of drugs, particularly tobacco and marijuana. A total of 134 students reported trying tobacco out of curiosity, while 90 students cited the same reason for experimenting with marijuana. Additionally, 31 students indicated that their first use of alcohol was driven by curiosity about its effects. Moreover, out of 11 hallucinogens consumers all eleven of them were influenced by curiosity. Out of 60 Abusers of cocaine 58 cited curiosity as a predisposing factor. Out of 51 Heroine takers 50 were driven by curiosity to try it for the first time. Another significant trend can be seen in the methylamine users as the statistics in the table indicated that 14 out of 15 consumers' citied curiosity as their predisposing factor. Others factors like peer pressure, coping with stress, and improvement in social life as them cannot be single reason for initiating any drug however a strong relation can be found that heavy drugs like cocaine heroine methylene were dominated by cause of curiosity

Peer pressure emerged as another significant influence, especially in the use of tobacco. Of the participants, 128 reported that they were encouraged by friends or classmates to try tobacco. Marijuana and alcohol were also frequently associated with peer pressure, with 105 and 30 students respectively acknowledging this as a reason for their first-time use. Statistics shows a notable trend that the most citied reason in marijuana consumers is peer pressure making

peer pressure as one of the significant reason of initiating drugs. This particular trend indicated that peer pressure isn't significant as curiosity but a drug like marijuana or cannabis are being consumed for the first time mostly because of peer pressure.

Coping with stress or anxiety was identified as a critical reason for drug initiation, particularly for those who turned to prescription drugs. According to the survey, all 63 abusers of prescribed drugs reported starting prescription drug to manage stress. Out of total 205 participants 63 reported as abusers of prescribed drugs making it 3rd most abused substances. A significant relation can extract out of the results that out of 63 abusers of prescribed drugs all of them cited coping with stress and anxiety as a pre disposing factor. This finding underscores the role of emotional and psychological challenges in driving drug use among students.

Finally, the belief that drug use would enhance *social life* was strongly linked to the consumption of tobacco, marijuana, and alcohol. A total of 140 out of 158 students tried tobacco in the hope of improving their social interactions, while 98 students cited this reason for trying marijuana while out of 42 consumers of alcohol said the same about staring using alcohol. When considering all factors, **tobacco** was the most commonly used drug, with 158 students reporting its use across various reasons. **Marijuana**

followed with 109 students were found using prescribed drugs mainly because of stress and anxiety.

Table 3: *Predisposing factors of consumption of Drug*

Drugs consumed	Predisposing factors				Total
	When I first tried drugs, I was mainly curious about their effects.	I feel pressured by friends or classmates to try drugs for the first time.	I tried drugs for the first time because I was trying to cope with stress or anxiety	When I first tried drugs, I believed that they would help me improve my social life?	
Alcohal	31	30	35	35	42
Tobacco	134	128	139	140	158
arijuana	90	105	101	98	109
Prescribedrugs	51	51	63	45	63
Cocaine	58	52	56	47	60
Herione	50	42	44	41	51
Methmaphetamine	14	9	11	10	15
Hallicinogens	11	8	8	8	11
Total	184	166	182	143	205

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 2.

b. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

Why they use Drugs

Participant were asked to identify whether they agree or disagree with the statements regarding drugs. These statements are designed to find out why students use drugs. The cross-tabulation analysis in table 1.4 presents data on the relationship between the type of drug used and the various reasons reported by university students for their drug use. The table reveals several significant trends and associations between specific drugs and the causes leading to their usage.

The data represents 205 university students, with varying responses to why they engage in drug The most commonly reported cause is financial stress, with 184 students indicating that they use drugs due to financial pressures. A significant number, 179 students, reported that they are influenced by friends who use drugs. 182 students indicated that they use drugs to manage stress and anxiety.178 students believe there is easy access to drugs on campus, which facilitates their usage.

Table 4: *Reasons to addiction of dugs*

	Using drugs helps me feel less anxious when I am stressed.	My friends who use drugs makes me more likely to use them myself.	Due to my financial situation I experience financial stress and use drug.	I feel there is easy access to drugs on campus.	Total
Alcohol	37	33	38	39	42
Tobacco	148	144	146	144	158
marijuana	104	100	101	103	109
prescribe drugs	56	54	55	55	63
cocaine	59	57	56	56	60
heroine	47	49	47	47	51
Methamphetamine	14	14	10	12	15
Hallucinogens	9	9	11	9	11
Total	182	179	184	178	205

Percentages and totals are based on respondents.

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 2.

b. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

Drug-Specific Trends

The highest number of students (39) reported that they use alcohol because of its easy accessibility on campus.37 students use alcohol to manage stress. Similar numbers of students (33 and 38, respectively) reported peer influence and financial stress as reasons for alcohol use.

Tobacco: The majority of tobacco users (144 out of 158) reported peer influence as a significant cause. A significant number of tobacco users also indicated stress relief (148) and accessibility (146) as reasons for their usage. *Marijuana:* appears to be the drug most associated with stress relief, with 104 students citing this reason. 100 students reported that peer influence contributes to their marijuana use. Both reasons are almost equally reported, with 101 and 103 students,

respectively. *Prescription Drugs:* The use of prescription drugs is evenly associated with all four causes (55 students each for stress relief, peer influence, financial stress, and accessibility). *Cocaine and Heroin:* For both cocaine (57) and heroin (49) users, peer influence is the most cited reason for their use. These are also significant factors, with stress relief and accessibility being reported by 59 and 56 students for cocaine, and 47 and 47 for heroin, respectively. *Methamphetamine:* These are the top reasons for methamphetamine use, with 14 students each citing them. Slightly fewer students reported stress relief (14) and financial stress (10) as reasons. *Hallucinogens*: Peer influence is the most significant cause for hallucinogen use, reported by 9 out of 15 users. Fewer students cited financial stress (9) and accessibility (10) as reasons.

Significant Relationships

Peer Influence: is a pervasive factor across all drug categories, particularly strong among tobacco, marijuana, and cocaine users. *Stress Relief* is another significant cause, especially among marijuana users, indicating a strong association between stress management and drug use in the student population. The *ease of access* to drugs on campus is a common thread across most drug categories, suggesting that efforts to control drug availability might significantly reduce usage rates. *Financial Stress* is another critical factor, indicating that economic pressures contribute substantially to drug use among students.

Table 5: *Academic Performance. (n=207)*

Statement	Mean	SD
My ability to concentrate on my studies has decreased since I started using drugs 19	3.51	1.023
My ability to concentrate on my studies has increased since I started using drugs.20	2.44	.95840
My attendance in classes has decreased since I started using drugs.21	3.53	.99890
Do you feel hesitant to participate in class discussions because of the effects of drug use?22	2.69	1.179
Since you started using drugs, how often have you missed classes due to feeling unwell or unable to focus, which you believe might be related to drug use23	3.19	1.24417
Since I started using drugs, it is difficult for me to complete assignments on time.24	3.57	.95642
Since I started using drugs, my grades have decreased compared to earlier semesters.25	3.61	.94728

Impact on Academic Performance

The table1.5 presents the descriptive statistics (N, Mean, and Standard Deviation) for several Likert-scale questions related to the effects of drug use on academic performance among students.

Ability to Concentrate on Studies (Decreased vs. Increased)

Decreased (Mean = 3.51), the average response indicates that students tend to agree that their ability to concentrate on studies has decreased since they started using drugs. A mean value of 3.51 on a 5-point scale suggests a slight inclination towards agreement. Interestingly, students also slightly agree that their concentration on studies has increased (Mean *=2.44).* This suggest that while some students feel a decline in focus, others might perceive an increase, perhaps due to the simulative effects of certain drugs (Farid & Ashraf, 2025).

Table 6: *Descriptive Statistics*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
How often did you typically socialize with non-abuser friends and family before you started using drugs?26	207	3.5507	1.09548
How often do you typically socialize with your non abuser friends and family now?27	207	2.8357	.93064
How often you feel uncomfortable with non-abusers.	207	3.6473	1.01746
how often you feel comfortable with people who use drugs?	207	3.5652	1.09914
Have you ever experienced conflicts with your family or friends regarding drug use?	207	3.5362	1.05084
Do you believe your drug addiction has made you violent towards your social circle34	207	3.4831	1.04670
Valid N (list wise)	207		

Attendance in Classes

Students tend to agree that their attendance has decreased since they started using drugs. The mean score of 3.53 indicates a general acknowledgment of this negative impact.

Hesitancy in Class Participation

The lower mean of 2.69 suggests that students are more neutral or slightly disagree with feeling hesitant to participate in class discussions because of drug use. This could imply that drug use might not strongly affect their participation.

Missing Classes Due to Unwellness or Lack of Focus

The mean of 3.20 indicates a tendency towards neutrality or slight agreement that students miss classes due to feeling unwell or unable to focus, which may be related to drug use.

Difficulty in Completing Assignments on Time

Students agree that using drugs has made it difficult for them to complete assignments on time, as reflected in the mean of 3.58. This suggests that drug use may impair their ability to manage academic responsibilities.

Grades Decreased Compared to Earlier Semesters (Mean = 3.62):

The highest mean (3.62) indicates a stronger agreement among students that their grades have decreased since they started using drugs. This

reinforces the negative impact of drug use on academic performance.

Impact on social lives

The table 1.6 presents the descriptive statistics for students' responses regarding their social interactions and experiences before and after initiating drug use. When the participants were asked about *how frequently they usually socialized with friends and relatives who were not drug abusers before beginning to use drugs*, the mean response to the question was 3.55 (SD = 1.10). This shows that, as a whole, pupils were socializing with non-abusers before using drugs. The average participants responded to the question of *how frequently participants now interact with friends and family who are not abusers* dropped to 2.84 (SD = 0.93). This suggests that after beginning drug use, the participant's social connections and meetings with non-abusers decreased significantly which again indicates that after starting drugs abusers don't like to be around their prior friends and family members. Asking participants *how often they felt uncomfortable near non-abusers,* they gave a mean response of 3.65 (SD = 1.02). This suggests that students who use drugs may frequently experience discomfort in social situations involving non-abusers. Regarding *how often participants felt at ease around drug users,* the mean response was 3.57 (SD = 1.10). This implies

that students who take drugs typically feel more at ease with other students who share their habits socializing with them make them more comfortable. When asked the participants *if they have ever had arguments over their drug usage with friends or family*, the average response was 3.54 (SD = 1.05). This indicates that conflicts related to drug use are relatively common among the participants. The mean response was 3.48 (SD = 1.05) when asked *if they thought their drug addiction had caused them to become aggressive against their social group*. This shows that participants are in agreement with a significant ratio that their addiction might have contributed to their acting violently against their social groupings.

Discussion

The findings of this study shed light on the motivation for substance abuse, factors influencing it, and its subsequent effects on academic performance and social well-being among university students in Lahore. This discussion interprets these findings in the context of the research questions and compares them to existing literature to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic.Why do students in universities in Pakistan, especially universities, use drugs?This study shows that curiosity, peer pressure, stress management and social promotion are the main reasons for drug use among students. Curiosity emerged as a major motivator, especially for hard drugs like cocaine and heroin (Sarwar & Farid, 2025). This finding aligns with the theory that drug abuse often begins as an experimental behavior, which can quickly escalate into regular use, especially when influenced by peer pressure and stress. Curiosity as a motivator for drug use is well-documented in the literature. For instance, studies by (Johnston et al., 2014) and (Sussman and Ames, 2008) have highlighted curiosity as a primary factor leading young people to experiment with substances. The prevalence of curiosity-driven drug use in this Pakistani context underscores the need for preventive education that directly addresses misconceptions about drug effects and consequences. Peer pressure, another significant

motivator identified, aligns with findings by (Kaduce et al., 2002), which emphasize the role of social circles in shaping drug use behaviors among adolescents and young adults.What are the risk factors that lead to substance abuse? Stress management, peer influence and ease of access to medication were identified as important risk factors. This study shows that all prescription drug users cited stress reduction as a reason for use, emphasizing the important role of mental health in substance use. The influence of peers, especially on tobacco and marijuana use, shows how powerful social networks can be in drug addiction. The role of stress in the development of substance abuse is consistent with international research that identifies stress and mental health problems as a key factor in substance use (Simons & Chen, 2006; Cooper et al., 1992). In Pakistan, where mental health resources are scarce and stigmatized, students may turn to drugs to help them, the findings suggest. Peer influence is important, especially in a complex society like Pakistan. The research done by (Arnett, 2005) supports the idea that peer influence is very strong in adolescence and early adulthood, because this is important to start using drugs. The finding that easy access to drugs on campus is a major factor suggests that universities should strengthen their policies and practices to control the availability of drugs. This is in line with research done by (Wechsler et al., 2000) which shows that the environment of the university plays an important role in controlling or preventing drug use.How does drug use affect academic performance and social life?The study found that drug use negatively affected academic performance, with students reporting decreased concentration, poor attendance and poor grades. Social life was also significantly affected, with students reporting less interaction with non-users and increased comfort with other drug users.The negative effect of substance use on academic performance is well supported by the literature. Studies such as (Aria et al., 2013) and (Ford & Schroeder, 2009) have documented a negative relationship between substance use and academic outcomes, including GPA and class participation. . The findings from this study suggest that similar

trends are evident among Pakistani university students, with drug use impairing their ability to focus, participate in classes, and complete assignments.The social consequences of drug abuse, including reduced interactions with non-users and increased conflicts, align with findings from research by (Schulenburg et al., 2001) and (Patrick et al.,2011), which have shown that substance abuse can lead to social isolation and strained relationships. In the Pakistani context, where social and family ties are particularly strong, these findings suggest that drug abuse can have profound implications for student's social lives, leading to increased social discomfort and conflict.When comparing these findings with those from other studies, several patterns and differences emerge. The role of curiosity and peer pressure in drug initiation is a consistent finding across different cultural contexts, as noted by (Johnston et al., 2014) and (Arnett, 2005). However, stress as an antecedent factor in this study may be seen in Pakistan, where mental health services are less accessible and society stigmatizes help-seeking (Mabashar & Saeed, 2001). The effect of substance abuse on school performance and social well-being is a common topic in international research. However, some of the social dynamics observed in this study, such as changes in social circles and increased comfort with drug users, may reflect the nature of Pakistani society. This suggests that interventions in Pakistan need to focus not only on individual behavior but also on the broader social environment that supports or discourages drug use.

Conclusion

In summary, this study sheds light on important variables that influence drug addiction among Pakistani university students in Lahore. The main drivers are curiosity, peer pressure, stress management and social promotion. Stress and peer pressure are very important. Drug use was also found to have a negative impact on social interactions and academic performance, which is why interventions are needed more quickly. These findings highlight the need for comprehensive solutions to effectively address drug addiction in educational environments. These measures include prevention education, mental health support, and campus policies.

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