



## Substance abuse: Intervention of positive strengths

Sajad Ahmad Bhat

Research Scholar, Dept. of Psychology, AMU, Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, India

### Abstract

Substance abuse is a worldwide issue that takes a heavy toll on every global community and nation. According to World Health Organisation, one among 20 adults is estimated to have used an illicit drug once. United Nation on Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) in their annual report of 2014 reflected that 1,83,000 deaths were caused by the overdose of illicit drugs in 2012 most of them belong to the age group of 15-64 and between 162-324 million people of this age group have used an illicit at least once a year. These illicit drugs were mostly reported to have belonged to the cannabis, opioids, cocaine or amphetamine-type of stimulants group. In this paper, an attempt was made to find out positive psychological strengths that can help an individual in the addiction recovery process. Several research studies were examined and it was found that the positive psychological abilities have a positive relationship with the recovery stage of an individual. The positive strengths of hope, resilience, optimism, confidence, and self-esteem were found positively contributing to get over the problem of substance use. People having more positive strengths are more likely to recover rather than those who were low on these dimensions. There are also lower chances of relapse among the people with more positive strengths. This research suggests the researchers, practitioners, and professionals working with substance users to develop intervention strategies that inculcate positive psychological qualities in person with substance use to recover more effectively.

**Keywords:** substance use, illicit drug, positive strengths, intervention strategies

### Introduction

Drug Abuse, Substance use, Problem Abuse or Drug Addiction is a social problem that is worrisome because of its prevalence among the younger generation. It is a global concern for the world community at large and an economic burden along with the toll it casts on nations worldwide. During the past two-three decades, the incidences of substance abuse are on rising in every community of the world among its most productive populations. It has been estimated that approximately 0.2 million premature deaths due to substance use majority being attributed to opioids (UNODC 2017). There are higher rates of HIV infections and Hepatitis cases reported due to substance use. According to a joint report produced by United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the World Bank and the World Health Organization (WHO) there is an estimate that approximately 12.7 million people inject the drugs which would increase the incidences of HIV/AIDS and other infections. Under the influence of drug use, social participation also decreases; while the age-appropriate activities are getting diminished (Segal & Stewart, 1996)<sup>[13]</sup>. Drug abusers teens are at greater academic risk. Maladjustment and poor performance in school likely increase the chances of dropping out of studies and making them economically vulnerable (Hops, Davis, & Lewin, 1999). Teen substance abusers also have greater delinquency rates and homicidal and suicidal behavior compared to their non-abusing peers (Segal & Stewart, 1996)<sup>[13]</sup>. These outcomes associated with substance abuse result in less optimistic futures for teens and an economic drain on society.

There are various rehabilitation programmes available for the recovery from Substance use. But there continues to be a gap in service provision, as recent data says that only One in six problem abusers receive treatment. Rehabilitation programmes around the world focus on detoxification and drug dependence recovery. This paper will look for those research studies that will talk about the psychological positive strengths believed to help in the recovery phase and effective treatment.

Dina, Paul, and Harms in a study conducted by them in which they went to see the effects of Psychological capital on Mental Health and Substance abuse. They collected the data for study from the U.S Army and a total of 1889 Army soldiers were recruited for this study. The results of their study revealed that army personnel's having higher levels of psychological strengths like hope; resilience; self-efficacy and optimism prior to deployment are less likely to receive a diagnosis of mental health problems and substance abuse post-deployment. In addition to this, the effects of psychological capital on mental health diagnosis were mediated by soldiers overall health perceptions. The positive strengths of army personnel 'appear as a shield for substance use.

In another study conducted by Davood, Hasan and Javanmard in 2013 in which they compared the psychological capital and Meta-cognitive Beliefs between drug dependent students and normal students. Psychological capital is a higher order construct that includes the positive strength components. The study was conducted on the Azad university students of Tabriz Iran in 2013. 50 drug dependent and 50 normal students were studied over the course of time and after the analysis of

the data, the results revealed by the study reflected that both the groups differ significantly in terms of psychological capital and meta-cognitive beliefs. This study also provides us an insight regarding the role of positive psychological strengths in substance use prevention and recovery. Drug-dependent students suffer lower psychological capital and impaired meta-cognitive beliefs.

The role of psychological strengths has also been studied across the various cultures. Resilience is believed to be a good protector for the substance abuse. Resilience prevents the early relapse chances. Resilient is an ability of an individual to bounce back from adversities and difficult times or adapting well to trauma, tragedy, threat, or extreme stressors like the death of some loved one, suicide, divorce, break up etc. Resilience is not a trait of any single person or system, but rather it is a set of processes that can be inferred when the system being considered shows competence in response to significant risk exposure (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998) <sup>[9]</sup>. Wills and his colleagues (1992) examined survey data from nearly 1300 multiethnic urban youth, ages 11–13, in an effort to identify factors protecting against substance use. Using interaction terms in a multivariate regression to determine the protective ability of self-perceived competence, academic competence and healthy interactions with adults (adult competence) buffered the effect of negative life events on adolescent substance use.

The construct of self-efficacy is also believed to be the positive strength that acts as a protector to addiction or recovery from substance use. Self-efficacy is conceptualized by Bandura as a belief that one can successfully execute behaviors needed to produce the desired outcome and a treatment plan. Since the inception of the idea of self-efficacy a number of research studies have been conducted in various life domains including substance use. Bandura and Locke (2003) <sup>[2]</sup> in a review of 9 Meta-analyses studies on self-efficacy, in which self-efficacy was examined in various life domains (e.g., performance at work, academic performance, performance in sports and Health). Self-efficacy was found to be a strong predictor of the occurrence of coping behavior, level of performance, and perseverance in the adversities. Self-efficacy also mediated between the earlier and subsequent performance. Bandura and Locke concluded that belief in one's performance efficacy, i.e., the belief that desired results can be achieved by one's own efforts, is necessary to mobilize and sustain coping behaviors (Bandura and Locke). Sitharthan and Kavanagh (1990) <sup>[14]</sup>, Kavanagh, Sitharthan and Sayer (1996) <sup>[7]</sup>, and Maisto, Connors, and Zywiak (2000) found that self-efficacy significantly predicted alcohol consumption for periods of up to twelve months. Vielva and Iraurgi (2001) <sup>[15]</sup> in a study found that those having high levels of self-efficacy resist drinking were more likely to maintain abstinence for 6 months.

Self-esteem has also been studied in relation to addiction. Alavi (2011) <sup>[1]</sup> conducted a study which includes the 283 people included 200 people with the history of addiction, theft, and prostitution in Iran. The results of this study indicated that lower levels of self-esteem can be the reasons for addiction, theft, and prostitution. Self-esteem

as a positive strength is can help an individual in recovery from addiction. To increase the level of self-esteem in an individual through intervention strategies and counseling techniques, they can help in the recovery process and limit the chances of relapses.

### Discussion

Positive psychological strengths help an individual to tackle the daily hassles as well as long-term adversities. These strengths make a person capable of dealing with stressors and negative life events. The research studies examined in this present paper suggests that positive psychological strengths are helpful in various domains of life. Self-efficacy, optimism, resilience, self-esteem and other positive strengths were seen as a shield against drug relapse and help in the phase of recovery. There are implications for mental health practitioners, counselors and rehabilitation workers to implant positive strengths in the victims of substance abusers to help them to get rid of this menace.

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