

Research paper on factors that are associated with women and drug abuse

[Health & Medicine](#), [Addiction](#)



Abstract

Drug addiction is not only common in men but also in women. However, it does not happen accidentally. Certain factors influence women's engagement in drug initiation and even addiction: natural physical susceptibility; personality measure of women; peer relationships; family relationships; marital relationships; social media and marketing; discrimination; acculturation; socioeconomic condition; and victimization in sex and prostitution. These factors have different influencing ways upon women. Likewise, the effects these have upon women have varying degrees as well. Seeing these factors does not only imply knowledge of the issue, but brings forth the need to deal with it.

The term 'addiction' can be understood on a range of severity from misuse to abuse to dependence. This is commonly used for social issues pertaining to drugs, alcohol, computers, sex, and so on. As societies reveal serious manifestations of the aforementioned issues through the years, the term addiction, indeed, has negative implications. Besides, addiction in various ways always results in adverse effects. Drug addiction is one form of serious addictions that are widely known in societies worldwide. It is even alarming that drug addiction, whether it is misuse, abuse or dependence, is not limited for men alone. It is already widely acknowledged that even women resort into such phenomenon. Studies show that in young adults, for instance, the proportion of female users reporting drug dependence was significantly higher than male users (Cotto et. al., 2010). Whether prior to or subsequent to imprisonment, incarcerated women have high rates of substance abuse problems (Peltan & Cellucci, 2011). Other studies on drug

use in developed countries indicate significantly higher rate of drug addiction in men. However, research shows little difference in drug addiction rates between young men and young women. Girls exceeded boys in their use of alcohol and drugs, and they are significantly more likely to become drug dependents (Cotto et. al., 2010). This clearly implies that drug addiction, either misuse or dependence or abuse, is a growing problem for women today. This paper analyzes the factors associated with the relationship between women and drug addiction.

Drug abuse does not happen immediately. As aforementioned, drug addiction is a process that starts from misuse to abuse to dependence. Nevertheless, since all these have negative implications, this research paper will somehow discuss drug addiction in a more general way.

There is a wide network of factors that influence women to have initial drug use and the subsequent development following such initial action. There is no one characteristic of women is solely responsible for leading them to drug addiction. Factors involve in this drug addiction development can be classified in general categories: relationships, self, and society. These factors have various degree of influence in substance abuse development of a woman. Also, other effects associated with the development could also come in various levels. Conversely, these factors may positively influence women, protecting and preventing them from substance abuse. For instance, peers could serve as a great compelling factor for drug initiation. Nevertheless, it could also serve as protection and help for women.

Simply, one factor that influences women to be drug addicted is related to the physical nature of women. Biologically, a woman's body has greater

vulnerability to the effects of using drugs. Prescribed drugs, for instance, do not necessarily bring harm to the human body. However, a woman's body can be easily affected more than a man's. Recent data indicate that gonadal hormone estrogen of women facilitates drug abuse (Neill & Kulkami, 2010). When intake of these drugs is not taken with care, drug use becomes frequent and soon results in abuse and dependence. Sexuality difference of women in adaptations to stress and rewards systems mediates women's greater susceptibility to drug abuse and relapse compared to men (Greenfield, Back, Lawson, & Brady, 2010). Thus, women are more likely to have lifetime substance use disorders (McCabe, West, Hughes, & Boyd, 2013) when use is initiated.

The next factor has to do with the personality measure of a woman. For instance, studies show that women who mostly have aggressive masculine personalities have greater levels of drug use compared to men. Women falling into this category are those who have ambitious, dominant, lazy, and even rebellious behaviors whether at home or outside. Women in this condition can be considered having Antisocial Personality Disorder (ASPD), wherein they have higher rates of aggressiveness and irritability (Alegria et. al., 2013), manifesting strong personalities. Having such personalities could lead women to strongly compel themselves to initiate drug use. On the one hand, novelty-seeking has more association with initiation of drug use. Many women have weight-related concerns pertaining to body dissatisfaction, pressure and internalization pressures from thin-ideal social media advertisements, and appearance-related drug-use expectations (Warren, Lindsay, White, Claudat, & Velasquez, 2013). It is attested that sensation-

seeking characteristic of women has [large] indirect effects on risky sexual behaviors, relationships with risky partners, and drinking and drug use behaviors (Finkelstein, 2009). There are other personality risk factors that also influence drug addiction. This includes anxiety, depression, and possessiveness.

Another contributing factor for women to be drug addicted is peer relationships. Drug use and addiction is reported to start in schools. High school and college students become susceptible to drug use due to peers and colleagues. A susceptible individual can be influenced in two ways. The group members could either be using drugs themselves or could be recommending drugs to susceptible women. More people with whom women used alcohol or drugs were identified in personal networks of women (Min et. al., 2013). Study implies that drugs and other addictive substances become more available when women have associations with drug-using peer groups. In relation to the said factor, women can also be affected by familial relationships. Drug abuse often aggregates in family relationships. Women who have drug-addicted relatives are more likely to initiate or even develop drug use. Both genetic and environmental factors play significant roles in this influence (Finkelstein, 2009). This familial factor influences women in four ways. First, studies attest that women who have parents who are addicts are affected 10 to 50 times more than those without abusive parents. Second, drug initiation may be done due to personal condition of parents. For instance, when parents are psychopathologic, children are likely to resort to drug use. Third, familial factors may affect women through influence of siblings. Since sibling often have more time with each other at home, drug-

using siblings are more likely to compel others to initiate use. Also, peer groups of drug-using siblings have great compelling influence upon others. For instance, a brother, along with his peers, may use his strength and masculinity to force his sister to initiate drugs. Fourth, drug use can be influenced cohesion of family relationships. If parents fail to monitor and guide children appropriately, possibility of drug initiation increases. Studies suggest a long-term impact of childhood neglect as influencing factors for substance abuse of women (La Flair et. al., 2013). Relative to the previous factor, children without good relationships with their parents become more susceptible to seek association with peer groups - which could be drug-using people. Such parents, who spend most of their time at work, or those who spend family time at home by simply watching TV without talking, or those who fail to conduct healthy family discussions, or those who fail to plan family activities, provoke their children to lose their family relationships. Although family detachment does not happen immediately, children - who are more relational individuals than adults - will always look for closer relationships even outside the home. Moreover, children with mutually strong relationships with their parents more likely identify with the conventional characteristics of their parents. Thus, if parents do not use drugs, children will not do so as well.

Another factor that has great influence upon women to use drugs has to do with their marriage life. Marital relationship is the most intimate relationship an individual get attached to. Sadly, women become more susceptible to drug addiction through this form of relationship in two ways. First, if the husband is a drug user, the woman is more likely to be compelled, forced or ‘

encouraged' to initiate drug use as well. Sadly, such influencing factors from such men are often associated with physical force - resulting to physical abuse of wives. About 50% of women in substance abuse treatment reported to have perpetrated and/or experienced intimate partner violence (IPV) in the previous year (Kraanen, Vedel, Scholing, & Emmelkamp, 2013). Drug use is often preceded by or succeeded with domestic violence. Second, influence in marital relationships affect women in disrupts. Women have greater levels of emotional and psychological problems during divorce or marital conflicts. Gender differences in reasons for such disrupts indicate that women cite emotional and relational reasons, while men simply reason out their ignorance to the issue (Strong, DeVault, & Cohen, 2010).

Another contributing factor is the social portrayal of substance abuse. Young people have access to discourses of drug use through social media which emphasizes short term gains, such as pleasures or sexual fulfillment, instead of long term health, emotional, psychological and social problems (Shaw, Whitehead, & Giles, 2010). For instance, women, along with their sexual impulses, are significantly affected by commercials, which imply that engaging themselves to these addictive substances will develop their appearance, increase their sexuality, and attain to great sexual relationships with passionate and beautiful men. Although public authorities include warnings in these commercials, longer exposure to the commercials - in TVs, radios, posters, and billboards - will definitely bring its idea into the minds of women.

Another social factor is discrimination. Women have higher level of emotional dysfunction resulting from discrimination, which results to higher

susceptibility to substance use and addiction. Another has to do with acculturation. Though it has little effect compared to other factors, it involves “ intergenerational conflict and feelings of disconnection, a struggle for cultural identity, and loss related to the life left behind” (Finkelstein, 2009, p. 24) – which most likely lead women to substance use and addiction.

Furthermore, low socioeconomic condition of women has great influence for substance abuse.

Furthermore, a great influencing factor has to do with sex and prostitution. This is considered to have the highest level of [highly-negative] effects upon women. Such influence can be analyzed in a number of ways. First, drug use and addiction are prevalent to women who have past traumatic experiences than those who do not. Lifetime exposure to such traumatic experiences increases the risk for drug abuse among young people (Danielson et. al., 2009). Even in adult women, these can be by incest or rape in various forms: forcible, incapacitated, or drug-facilitated rape (McCauley, Ruggiero, Resnick, Conoscenti, & Kilpatrick, 2009). Victimization of women in such physical and sexual abuses always lead them to degrading emotional and physical conditions. Making efforts to deal with their emotional and physical humiliation, women use drugs – which often lead to abuse and dependence. Another way is in prostitution. Sadly, most of the women engaged to prostitution are merely victims. News, stories, and even movies like Luc Besson’s Taken in 2008 attest to this fact. Drug use is not only associated with early/first sexual assault but also with further victimization of women. Drug use and addiction result in deactivation of brain regions from “ control networks” in females that “ increases their vulnerability to drug relapse since

it would interfere with executive cognitive inhibition” (Volkow et. al., 2011, p. e16573). Drug using women often report multiple sources of sexual violence, and even if drug use numbs oneself to the trauma, “ it also erodes the sense of self-worth, importance, competence, and control” (Kohen, 2010, p. 209). Many women experience continued sexual and physical violence due to drug addiction (Sanders, 2011). Thus, women who were engaged to drug use in intimate partner violence (IPV), prostitution, incest, or rape sadly get sexually victimized, assaulted, and exploited even more due to drug abuse. These various factors associated with drug abuse come with various degree of compulsion, resulting in various degree of effect upon women. These have association with one another. For instance, child negligence can lead women to have drug-using peers who can bring the susceptible ones to prostitution. Also, social media can compel women to have aggressive sexual behaviors that make other people – particularly men – take chance of it – leading to sexual and physical assault. In some cases, drug injection and victimization can also happen through women’s partners. Nevertheless, the point is that this should be dealt with accordingly.

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