

## Impact of drug use on socio-economic conditions in Afghanistan

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### ARTICLE INFO



#### Keywords:

Drug, Abuse, Addiction, Afghanistan, Users, Opium

### ABSTRACT

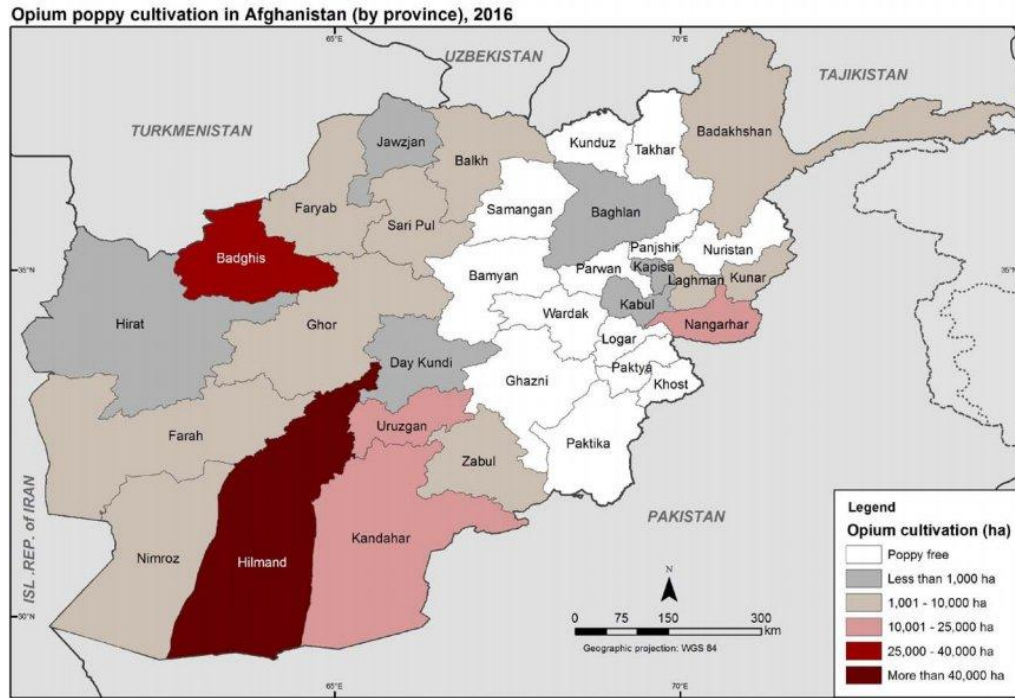
**BACKGROUND:** Afghanistan is well-known as the biggest producer of opium (90 %) in the world, there has been falls and raises in the amount of opium cultivated in this country but the problem still seriously persist to continue, the total area under poppy cultivation is estimated 201,000 hectares in 2016, as estimated 10 % increase from 2015. Narcotics is one of the unresolved issues of current world, which is responsible for hundreds of thousands of lives annually around the world, Despite the creation of several international conventions on prevention and trafficking of drugs, they are still available in many parts of the world. **METHODS:** A Cross sectional study is conducted to find out negative impacts of Drug use on individuals, their families and whole community. **PURPOSIVE SAMPLING** technique is used. Quantitative Data Analysis is done using 300 samples through structured questionnaire from drug users in Kabul, Balkh, Hirat provinces. **Qualitative Data is collected by individual interviews, Focus Group Discussions ( 8-10 Participants).** Samples are analysed individually and psychological, economic, other factors involved in the study are studied in methodological manner. **RESULTS:** Findings show that 27% of drug users are of very young age (15-25 years), 35% are of age group( 26-35 years), 26% are in age group ( 36-45 years) and only 12% are older drug addicts. Majority of workforce and independent age group are Drug users which contribute to social burden and increase the dependent age group percentage. 80% of Drug users are illiterate and 19% have attended schools. Education level of female Drug users is low as compared to male Drug addicts. 60% of Drug users live with their spouses, 28% live with parents, 5.6% live alone. Around 54% of drug addicts are multi drug users. **CONCLUSION:** As the poppy cultivation will persist to be higher in Afghanistan and the ever continuing conflicts and poverty beside other factors created a situation full of misery and hopelessness, drug users' prevalence and incident will be high and getting higher. It can exacerbate the poverty level and social disorder which in turn can affect the country economic and social order adversely and will encourage the illicit economy, increase crime and bring more cultural and social adversities to large extent. In this complex situation, this study has put light on the scale of social and economical impacts of drug use and had assist the authorities to have better understanding of the situation in order to put corrective and effective measures to rectify/contain and mitigate the extra burden this phenomenon will add to Afghanistan multi-crises

### **Introduction**

Afghanistan has been suffering from civil war for the last four decades which destroyed the entire infrastructure and undermine the good governance and rule of law in this country. The Government of Afghanistan spends significant amount of

resources in fighting imposed insurgency and terrorism. Afghanistan has large untapped energy and mineral resources, which have great potential to contribute to the country's economic development and growth. The major mineral

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Category	Geographical distribution (province)	Sex	
		Female (number of samples)	Male (number of samples)
Drug users at treatment centers, drugs users at assembly points, drug users at their family	Kabul	50	50
	Hirat	50	50
	Balkh	50	50

**Figure 1: Quantitative data samples distribution**

ore, lead and zinc, lithium, marble, precious and semiprecious stones, sulfur and talc among many resources include chromium, copper, gold, iron other minerals. The energy resources consist of natural gas and petroleum. According to a joint study by Pentagon and the United States Geological Survey, Afghanistan has an estimated 1 trillion USD of untapped minerals, although other sources estimate it at 3 trillion USD. In December 2013, President Karzai claimed the mineral deposits are actually worth \$30 trillion. But the facts remain bitter that the country still very much dependent on foreign aid and illicit economy.

Afghanistan is the world’s largest producer of opium generating roughly 90 % of global supply, the drug trade has become one of the main pillars of the Afghan economy accounting for an estimated 16 % of GDP and involving an estimated 5 % of the population.

**Country Profile:**

Afghanistan is a landlocked multi-ethnic country located at the crossroads of South and Central Asia. It lies along major trade routes connecting Southern and Eastern Asia to Europe and the Middle East.

		Age	Sex	Education level
N	Valid	300	300	300
	Missing	0	0	0
Mean		2.24	1.50	1.39
Std. Deviation		.997	.501	.876
Skewness		.332	.000	2.266
Std. Error of Skewness		.141	.141	.141
Range		4	1	5
Minimum		1	1	1
Maximum		5	2	6
Percentiles	25	1.00	1.00	1.00
	50	2.00	1.50	1.00
	75	3.00	2.00	1.00

**Figure 2. Statistical distribution of the relationship between age, sex and education level of the interviewed drug users.**

(With regards to the age distribution, the finding shows that large portion of the interviewed are young people, as matter of fact 27 % of the drug users are at very young age (15-25 yrs), 35 % are age group (26-35 yrs), 26 % are age group (36-45 yrs) and only 12 % are aged people)

Decades of conflict have damaged the country’s social fabric and rendered it vulnerable to socio-political schisms. The country covers an area of 652,230 square kilometers. It shares an international border with six countries: China, Pakistan, Iran, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. Afghanistan does not recognize the ‘Durand Line’ as the international border with Pakistan

**What is drug addiction?**

Addiction is a chronic, often relapsing brain disease that causes compulsive drug seeking and use, despite harmful consequences to the addicted individual and to those around him or her.

**What Happens to Your Brain When You Take Drugs?**

Drugs contain chemicals that tap into the brain’s communication system and disrupt the way nerve

cells normally send, receive, and process information. There are at least two ways that drugs cause this disruption: (1) by imitating the brain’s natural chemical messengers and (2) by over stimulating the “reward circuit” of the brain.

**The purpose of the study:**

The main purpose of this study is to identify the impact of high prevalence of the drug use on the social and economic conditions of the addicts and their families in Afghanistan

**Research questions**

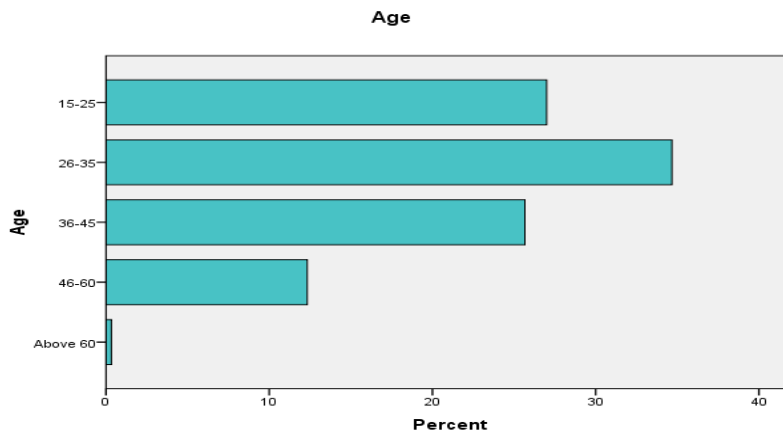
Through my research I would like to respond to emerging question on how so high percentage of population addicted to narcotics and what are the main motives behind peoples tendency toward drug use, some other affiliated factors will also be scrutinized that have had significant impact on drug use habit and impacts on social and economic condition of those addicted.

**Research objectives :**

- *Primary objective:* To identify the overall impacts and effects of drug use on social and economical conditions of population and factors associated with the tendency of drug use.
- *Secondary objective:* To present Preventive measures and constructive innovative solutions for this significant social and health problem to line ministries and relevant policy/strategy makers.

**Methodology**

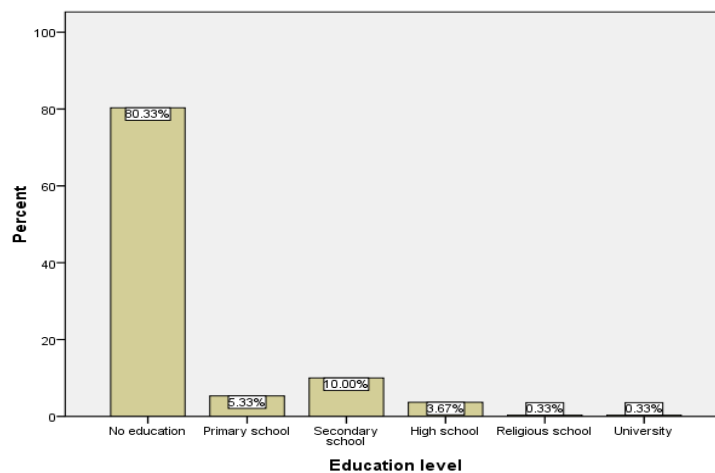
A cross sectional study is conducted to explore the negative impact of the drug use on individual, their families and the community they live. The study consisted of primary quantitative research on availability of drugs and easy accessibility to them, but it also focus to collect qualitative data through interview and focus group discussions in order to explore the motive behind tendency of drug users



**Figure 3. Age distribution of the interviewed drug users**

The presented graph shows that the level of education was low among all respondents, but comparatively the level of education of female drug users are significantly lower than male drug users .

The comparison of the gender level of education among drug users are also depicted among interviewed drug users.



**Figure 4: Level of education among interviewed drug users**

The presented graph shows that the level of education was low among all respondents, but comparatively the level of education of female drug users was significantly lower than male drug users.

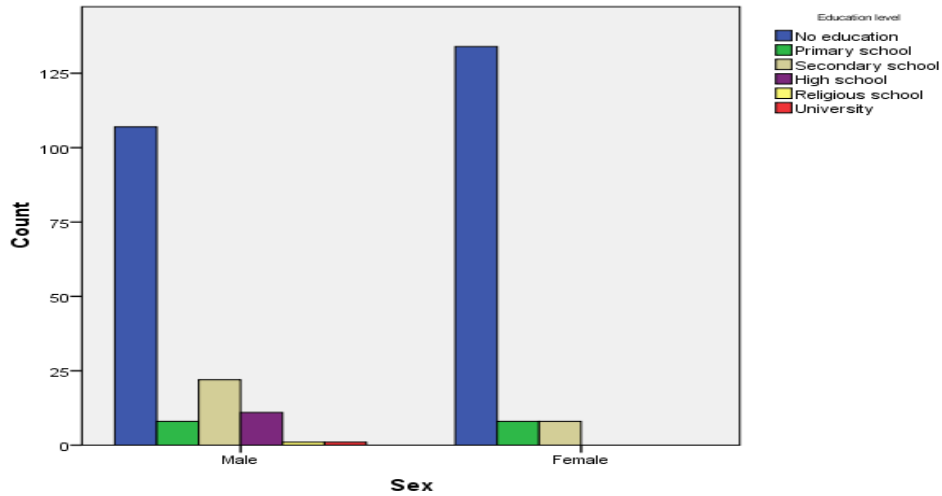


Figure 5. Educational background of interviewed drug users (by gender)

Most of the drug users (almost 60 percent indicated that they lived with their spouse and children, while 28 percent lived with their parents and 5.6 percent lived alone. It has been found that mainly female drug users lived within a

family setting of either their husband or close relatives, it should also be noted that the effect of female drug users on their children are significantly large.

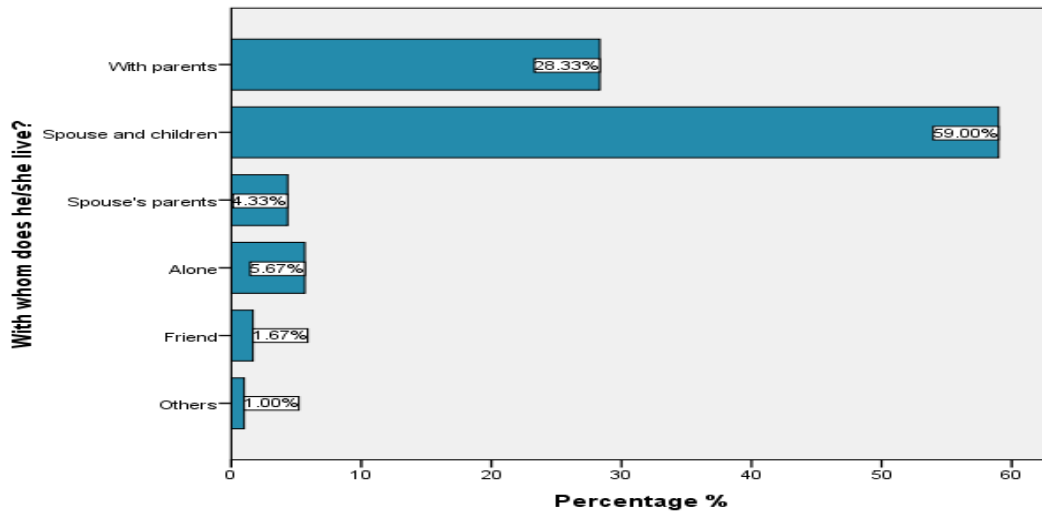
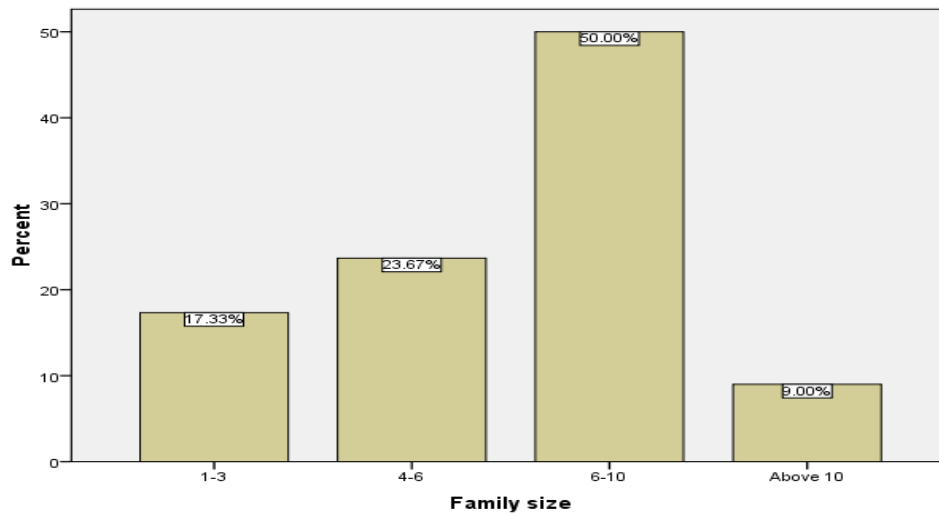


Figure 6: The location where the interviewed drug users live.



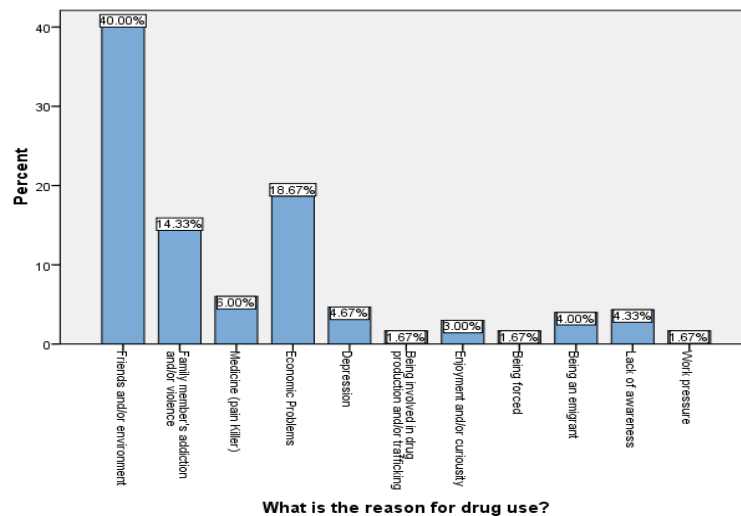
**Figure 7. Family size of the interviewed drug users.**

and how can drug using will affect the quality of their social and economic conditions at family and society level. The methodology used during the study will be questionnaires filled by drug users, individual interviews with drug users and focus-group discussions – formed the basis of the current study and was supplemented by a number of other research instruments. The general descriptions of the study methodology are as follow:

**Cross sectional study design** is chosen to give a detailed description of factors that influence the people tendency toward addiction. Purposive sampling technique is used.

**A- Quantitative data:**

Around 300 samples are collected through structured questionnaire from drugs users at the treatment centers and drug users’ assembly points in the Kabul, Balkh and Hirat provinces.



**Figure 8. Reason for drug use for the interviewed drug users.**

In the given figure, it indicated that the around 40 % of interviewed drug users notified friend and

environment as main reason for their drug use, and the family addiction as reason is only 14 % but it

also indicate the economic problems is one of the

significant reason for drug use in Afghanistan.

**B- Qualitative data:**

(a) Individual Interviews: drug users at treatment centers, their family members and relevant governmental officials were interviewed.

(b) Focus Group Discussion: 8 focus group discussions which each group consist of 8-10

Group (B) : Key stakeholders

Group (C) : Three FGDs of Drug users and their family members conducted in Kabul, Hirat and Balkh

Group (D): Three FGDs of community leaders/counsels was organised in Kabul, Hirat and Balkh provinces, in districts where the drug users are assembling regularly.

participants were conducted, following group of stakeholders were in the FGDs:

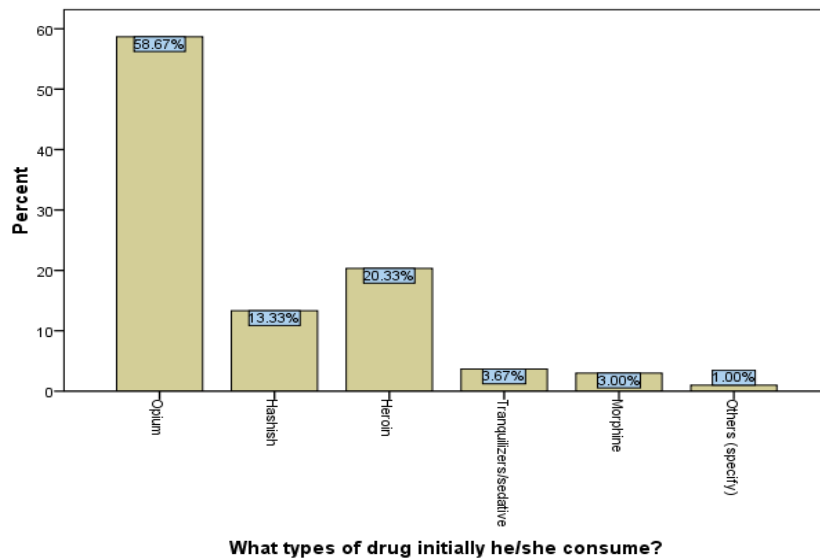
Group (A): Two FGDs of health professionals at Kabul Camp Phoenix treatment centers and Shahamat treatment center took place.

**Data collection and sampling**

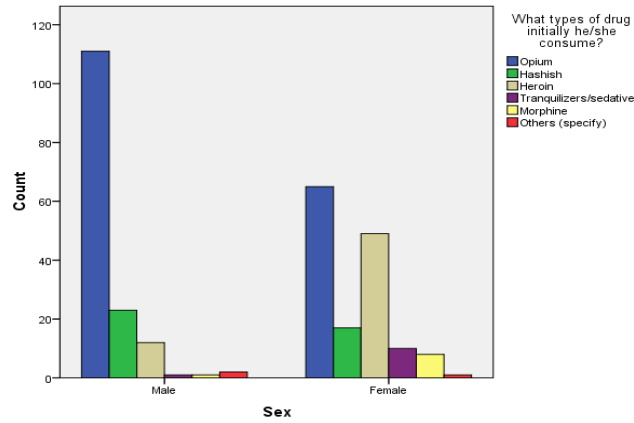
Data was collected by purposive sampling from all range of participants and their family members.

The data was collected from the direct interview from the drug treatment sites, places where drug users coming together. The other source of data was

***PATTERNS OF AND IMPACT OF DRUG USE***



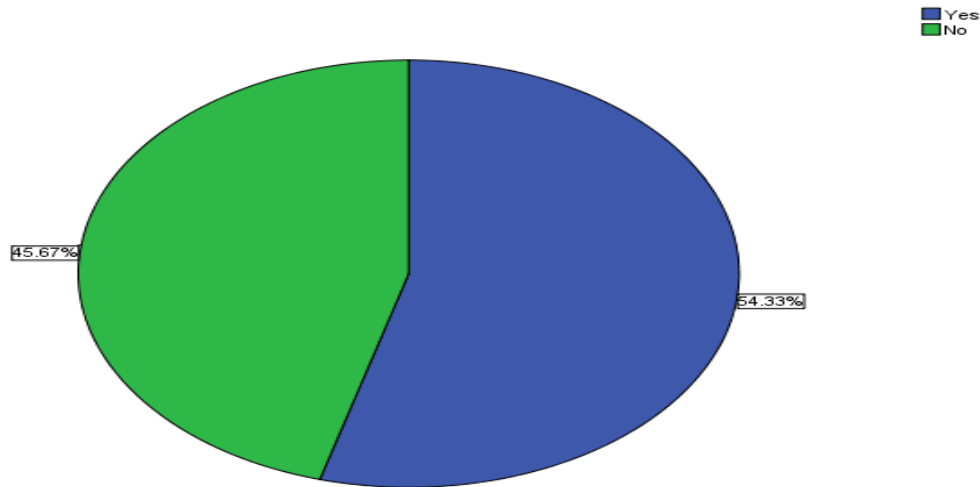
**Figure 9: Types of drugs initially consumed by interviewed drug users**



**Figure 10: Distribution of the drug type used by interviewed female and male drug users**

When asked about the location where the respondents had used drug for the first time, around 80 % drug users stated that they had started drug use in Afghanistan, while 17 % mentioned Islamic Republic of Iran and a small portion mentioned Pakistan. The fact remains that there is a close linkage between migration and drug

use, particularly the difficult working environment for Afghan economical migrants to these country is the main driver for their tendency toward drug use. This has already highlighted in previous studies that the linkage between migration and drug use exist.



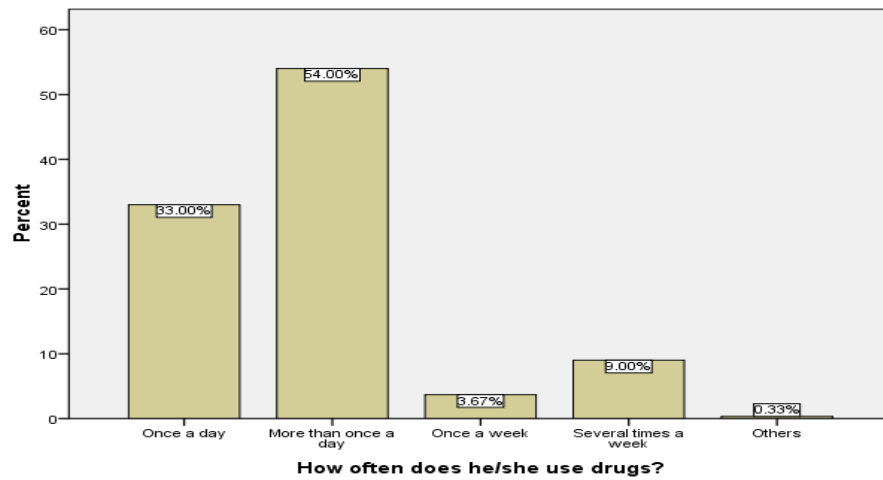
**Figure 12: Interviewed drug users consuming more than one drug?**

*Use Of Multiple Drugs Simultaneously*

In a study conducted by UNODC in 2014, It was indicated that use of more than one type of drug at the same time was not common among interviewed drug users (15.4 per cent

stated that they has used multiple types of drugs) but through this study, it was stated by interviewed drug users that 54 per cent are consuming more than one drug

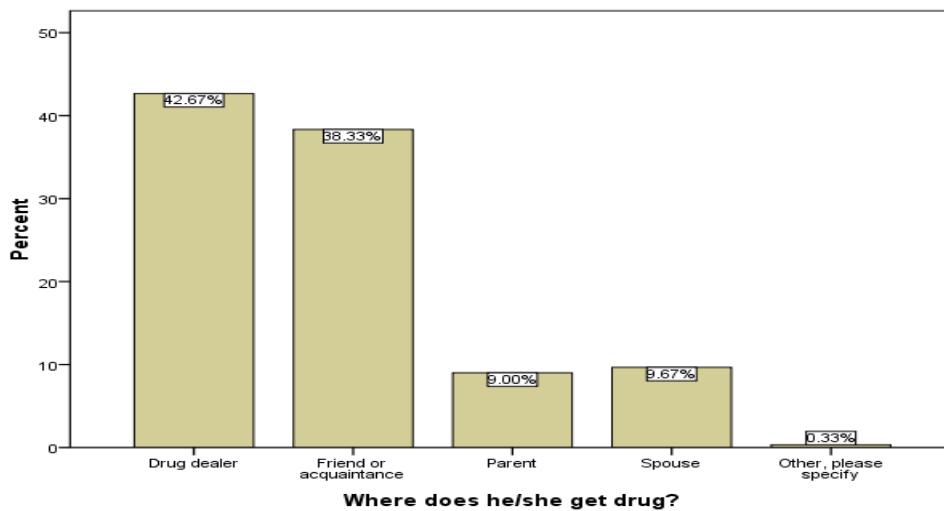




**Figure14: Frequency of multiple drug use by interviewed drug users**

Interviewees indicated that around (43 per cent) get the drugs from drug dealers while (30 per cent) get the drug from friends and acquaintance but the other

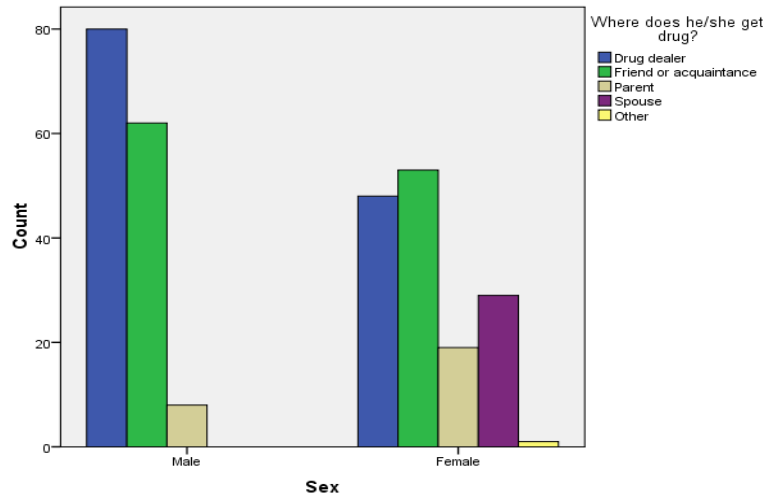
remaining respondents get the drugs from their spouse, parents and other sources



**Figure 15: The source (where) drug users get their drug**

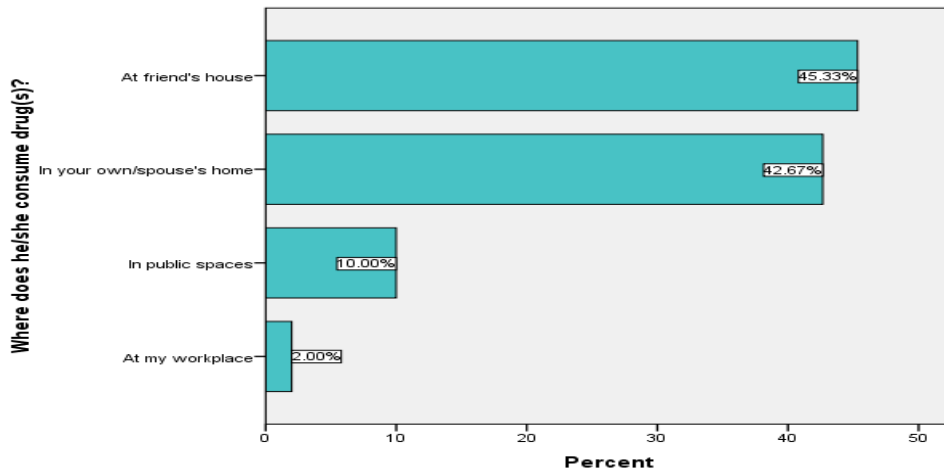
Again there were a clear difference male and female drug users with regards to where did they obtained their drug. The majority of male drug users indicated that they got the drug from drug dealers and their

friends but it differs with female drugs users where they get the drug from variety of sources including spouse, friends or acquaintance, drug dealers and their parents.



Interviews indicated that the majority of drug users (45.3 per cent) had used the drug for at a friend’s house, also a significant number of the drug users

indicated their own or spouse’s home as location for the consumption of drug.



**Consumption method:**The majority of the respondents indicated that they had taken the drug by

smoking and oral and a very low percentage reported having injecting or inhaling it.

		How does he/she use drug?					Total
		Oral	Smoking	Smoking and oral	Injecting	Inhaling	
Sex	Male	19	63	63	1	4	150
	Female	26	73	41	8	2	150
Total		45	136	104	9	6	300

Figure 19: Method of consuming drugs

How does he/she use drug? Male/female Cross-tabulation

from other studies conducted in this field by governmental and non-governmental entities. For the scientific impact of different type of opiates on human body, scientific journals were explored. Both qualitative and quantitative research was conducted about my selected subject. The collected samples were analyzed independently and the other related psychosocial, economic repercussion and other factors involved in this study was studied in a deep methodological manner.

The literature review on impact of drug user on socio-economic condition are being undertaken alongside the qualitative data collection through survey, interviews and focus group discussions with all those concerned. Numerous researches, reports and studies conducted in this area will be reviewed and quoted. I also used the report generated by United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes, INL

Literature review:

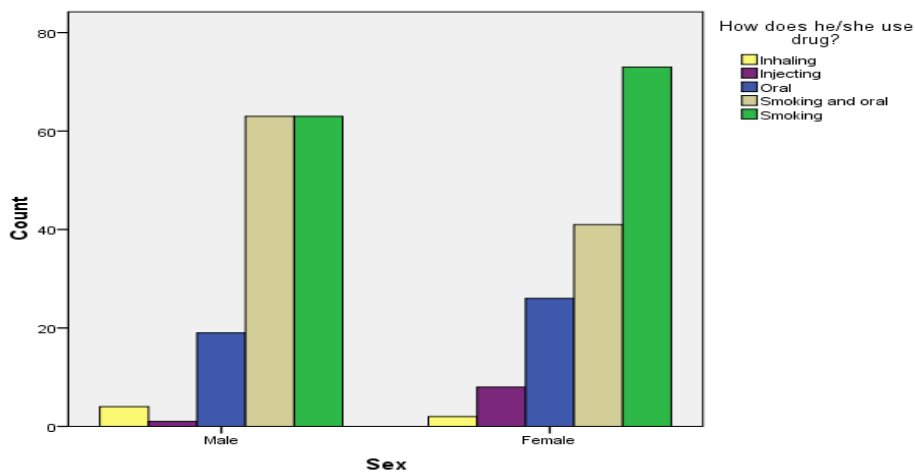


Figure 20: Consuming method (by gender)

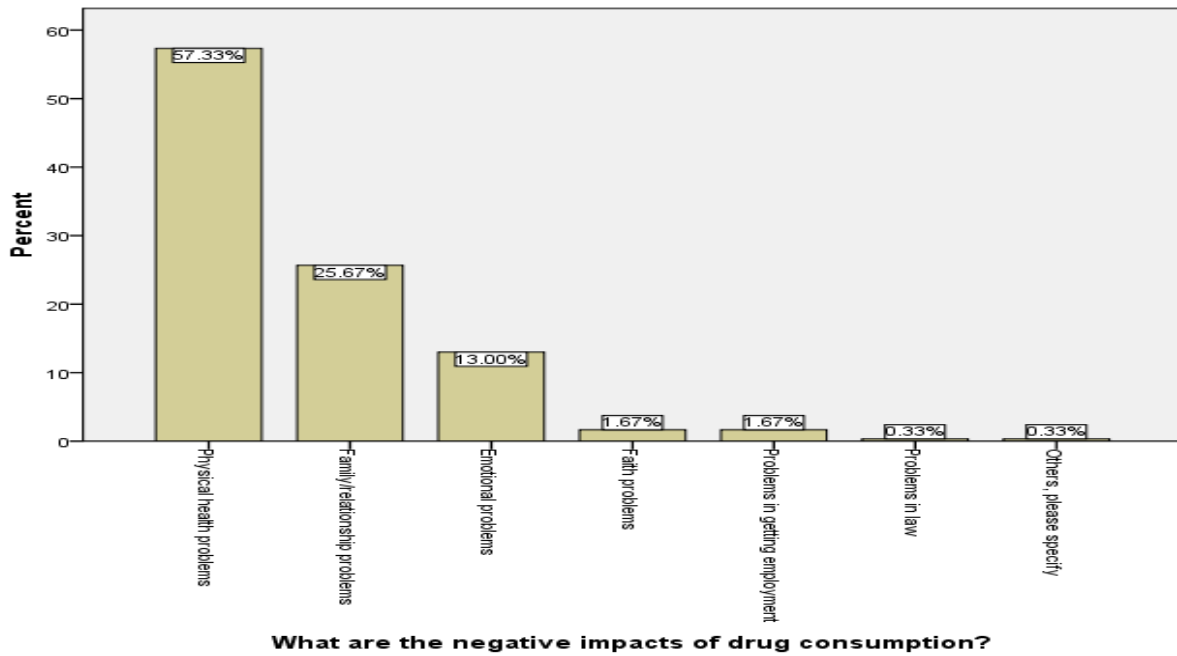
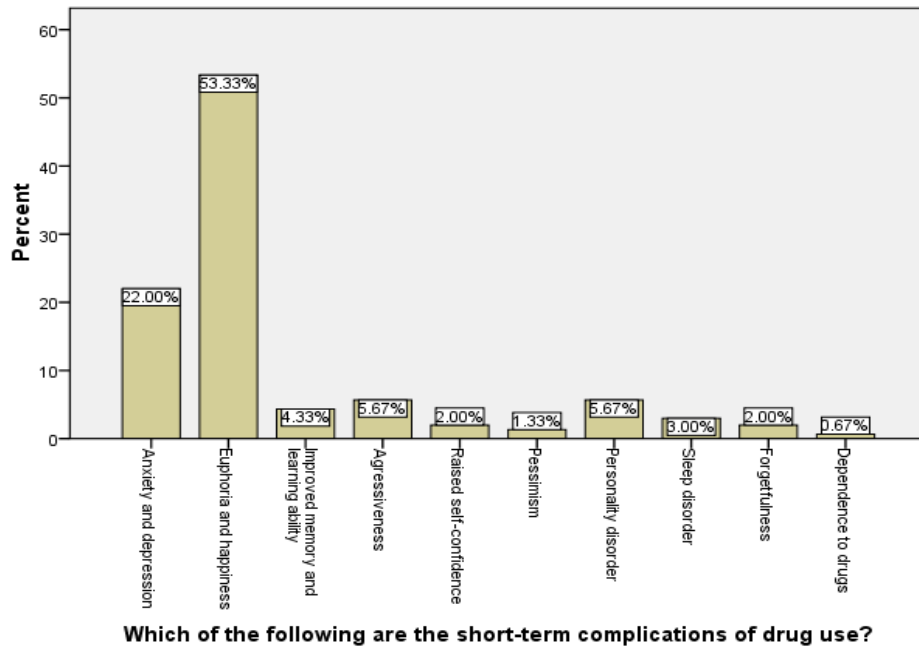
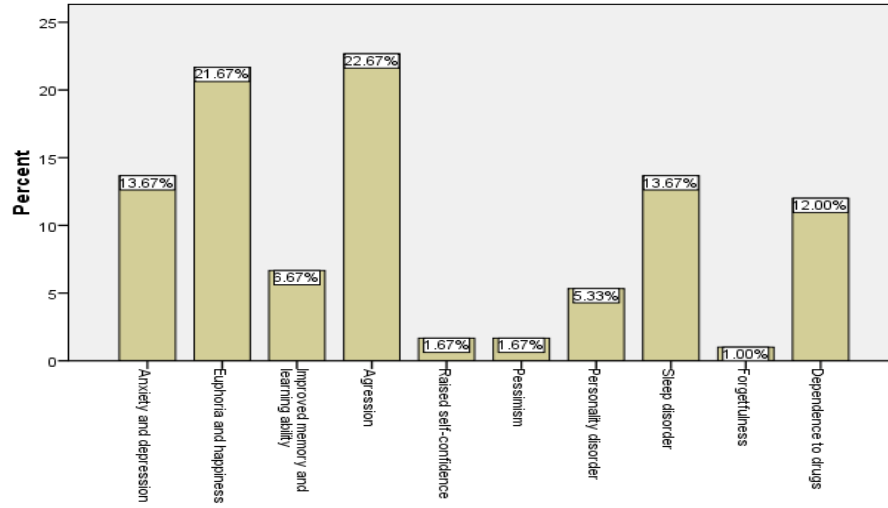


Figure 21: Negative impacts of drug consumptions

**HEALTH EFFECTS OF DRUG USE:**



Talking about the long-term complication of the drug use, the interviewed drug users experienced different type of problem.



**Which of the following are the long-term complications of drug use?**

The age in which drug users starts consuming drug are significantly important in identifying the facts and reasons behind their tendency toward drug use, Afghanistan is the large number of young generation. The interviewed drug users indicated that the majority (40.6 percent) consumed drug at the age

group of 21-30 years, 26 per cent at the age group of 31-40 yrs, and 22.3 per cent at the age group of 15-20 yrs. It is very unfortunate that majority respondents that they started consuming drug at their early ages and most of drug users are from the workforce age group

and WHO guidelines and went through all the available publications, reports and information in its website. The other documents reviewed are the publication of Ministry of Public Health and Ministry of Counter Narcotics of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. The qualitative findings are presented first but a comparative analysis of the global context and analysis are also be included as well.

*2. What are the demographic profile and geographical distribution of drug users?*

Data presentation, analysis and discussion of the findings:

*3. What type of social and economical impacts do the drug uses put on people life and social order; in the meantime it will scrutinize the overall country wide consequences?*

Data for this research are collected through structured questionnaire and interview techniques, the process of analysis consists classification, categorization of the data for final deduction and inference. The study was guided by the following research questions:

**SOCIAL IMPACT OF DRUG USE:**

The negative consequences of drug abuse affect not only individuals who abuse drugs but also their families and friends, societies, work environments, and government resources. The most obvious effects of drug abuse which are manifested in the individuals who abuse drugs include ill health, sickness and, ultimately, death.

*1. What the main reason behind individual tendency toward using drugs?*

**ECONOMICAL IMPACT OF DRUG USE:**

1. Annually Afghan MoPH spends USD 16 million for the treatment of drugs users, Afghanistan MoPH had 4700 beds available for that purpose, as per

MoPH they can only take 40,000 drug user under treatment in one year which is way lower than the overall number of the drug users in the country.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

Afghanistan is a war-torn country and has been experiencing civil war for the last four decades. This has significantly caused the country's economy, governance and lack of infrastructure, fortunately after the fall of Taliban and US intervention in Afghanistan, lots of development in every aspects of governance and socio-economic condition has taken place but in order to re-build the country more resources and time is needed.

Beside other critical situation in which the people of Afghanistan suffer, drug production has persist to immensely impact the situation, further to that drug use add on more catastrophic effect on the life of the people.

Afghanistan is the world largest producer of opium but also has significant number of drug users as well. Poverty, weak rule of law, high unemployment rate, migration, lack of good governance and insurgency are the main driver behind high incidence and prevalence rate of drug use in Afghanistan.

#### **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND LIMITATIONS:**

- ☐ Informed consent form signed by participants.
- ☐ Human rights and gender issues properly considered.
- ☐ Confidentiality and disclosure of participants' details have not been compromised.
- ☐ Security, accessibility and lack of cooperation and cultural restrictions particularly related to female participants are limitations.

#### **RESULTS:**

At the end of my study, I have found the social, cultural and psychological causes of why the prevalence/incidence rate for drug use in Afghanistan persist to be high and what other factors affect the choice for selecting to use drug. I have explored the reasons behind high production of opium and easy availability of opiate in Afghanistan.

**☐ *Socially marginalized and underprivileged section of the society are prone to drug addiction***

**☐ *The lucrative nature of crops (opium price), lack of security and rule of law, socio-economic vulnerability and insurgent pressures are the main reasons behind persisting consistent high poppy cultivation.***

**☐ *The study provides relevant real data on adverse socio-economic effects of drug use for possible intervention (policy-related or otherwise) that may improve the situation.***

**☐ *The study has raised the awareness of people about harmful consequences of drug use.***

#### **CONCLUSION:**

As the poppy cultivation will persist to be higher in Afghanistan and the ever continuing conflicts and poverty beside other factors created a situation full of misery and hopelessness, drug users' prevalence and incident will be high and getting higher. Unfortunately this phenomenon affect the young generation which are the majority and biggest percentage of workforce, this will have significant impact on individuals, their families and overall society. It can exacerbate the poverty level and social disorder which in turn can affect the country economic and social order adversely and will encourage the illicit economy, increase crime and bring more cultural and social adversities to large extent. In this complex situation, this study has put light on the scale of social and economical impacts of

drug use and had assist the authorities to have better understanding of the situation in order to put corrective and effective measures to rectify/contain and mitigate the extra burden this phenomenon will add to Afghanistan multi-crises situation.

### RECOMMENDATION:

Afghanistan government is committed to fight the poppy cultivation, treat the drug users with dignity and fight the illicit economy by obligations enshrined under UN conventions.

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