



Drug Addiction among Adults in Context of their Family Pathology Marital and Life and Parental Dissatisfaction

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE



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Received on : 13/09/2025
Revised on : 13/11/2025
Accepted on : 22/11/2025
Overall Similarity : 07% on 14/11/2025



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ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted on 50 drug addicts and 50 normal youths of Ranchi (Jharkhand) to make a comparison between the groups in terms of family pathology, marital mal-adjustment and life dissatisfaction. It was hypothesized that Drug addicts and normal youths work differ significantly in terms of (i) family pathology, (ii) marital mal-adjustment and (iii) life dis-satisfaction respectively. For the verification of hypotheses, the respondent groups were administered Family Pathology Scale, Marital Adjustment Questionnaire and Life Satisfaction Scale respectively. Besides these, the respondent groups were administered PDS to seek their personal and background information. The obtained data were analysed using t-test. The results supported the hypotheses. It was found that drug-addict group of adults were found belonging to pathological family, marital mal-adjustment group and life dis-satisfaction groups. Thus, it was concluded that family pathology, marital mal-adjustment and life dis-satisfaction all are significant contributors to drug-addiction.

KEY WORDS

Drug Addiction, Adults, Family, Pathology, Life.

INTRODUCTION

Drug addiction remains a pervasive and complex issue across societies, impacting individuals and families alike. It is a multifaceted condition that not only affects the physical and mental health of the person grappling with addiction but also significantly influences the family dynamics and relationships within a household. In recent years, there has been a growing

recognition of the role that family pathology plays in the development and perpetuation of drug addiction. Drug addiction is not an isolated phenomenon; rather, it exists within a web of environmental, social, and psychological factors, many of which are rooted in family experiences. Among the most critical of these factors are parental marital issues, life dissatisfaction, and the overall dysfunction within the family system.

The family serves as the first social environment in which children are exposed to patterns of behavior, emotional regulation, and coping mechanisms. Research has shown that dysfunctional family systems, characterized by poor communication, unresolved conflict, emotional neglect, or abuse, can significantly contribute to the development of maladaptive coping strategies in children. When these children reach adolescence and adulthood, they may turn to substances as a means of managing the emotional turmoil, stress, and unresolved issues carried from their family environment. Understanding the familial origins of drug addiction is therefore key to developing effective prevention and treatment strategies that target not just the individual, but the systemic issues within the family unit that may fuel addiction.

At the core of this exploration is the role of parental relationships particularly the marital dynamic within the family. The nature of parental relationships can have a profound effect on the emotional and psychological development of children. Parents who experience marital conflict, dissatisfaction, or separation may inadvertently model dysfunctional behavior for their children, who learn to cope with stress and emotional challenges in unhealthy ways. Moreover, unresolved parental conflict often breeds an environment of instability and unpredictability, which can create a fertile ground for substance abuse to take root. Children raised in such environments may come to view drugs as a way to escape, cope, or numb the pain of their family's dysfunction.

Furthermore, life dissatisfaction, whether experienced by parents or children, exacerbates the potential for drug addiction. Parents who feel unsatisfied with their careers, personal lives, or relationships may be more likely to engage in maladaptive behaviors, including substance abuse, which can in turn influence their children. When parents fail to model healthy coping mechanisms for dealing with dissatisfaction or stress, children may internalize these patterns and replicate them in their own lives. This perpetuation of negative coping strategies and emotional distress can increase the likelihood of drug addiction in the next generation.

This introduction explores the intersection of drug addiction with family pathology, parental marital issues, and life dissatisfaction. By situating addiction within the context of family dysfunction, this approach allows for a more holistic understanding of the factors that contribute to the development and continuation of substance abuse. It highlights the need to address not only the individual's addiction but also the underlying familial patterns that may have contributed to or are sustaining it. To better understand this complex issue, it is crucial to examine how family dynamics, marital conflict, and life dissatisfaction create an environment conducive to addiction. Additionally, understanding how these elements interact can inform more effective treatment strategies that not only focus on the individual suffering from addiction but also take into account the broader systemic issues that may need to be addressed in order to break the cycle of addiction.

Family pathology refers to dysfunctional behaviors, maladaptive coping strategies, and unhealthy relational patterns that are passed down through generations. It encompasses a range of issues such as emotional abuse, neglect, physical abuse, poor communication, and the failure to provide a secure and stable environment for children. Children raised in families marked by such dysfunction may struggle to develop emotional regulation skills, social competence, and healthy coping mechanisms. These children may find themselves unable to effectively deal with stress, trauma, or difficult emotions, leading them to turn to substances as a way of managing their pain or discomfort.

When addiction is viewed through the lens of family pathology, it becomes clear that the roots of drug abuse often lie in the early childhood experiences and the broader family environment. For instance, children who grow up in homes where addiction is present may be more likely to engage in substance abuse themselves, either as a result of modeling behavior or as a response to emotional neglect. These children may also face

barriers to healthy emotional development, including a lack of trust, a sense of powerlessness, or difficulty forming secure attachments, which can further predispose them to addiction.

The emotional dynamics within the family unit, particularly between parents and children, play a significant role in the development of substance abuse. A lack of emotional support, warmth, and validation from parents can lead children to feel unimportant or unloved. Such feelings can cause emotional distress, which may increase the likelihood of seeking external sources of relief—substances such as drugs or alcohol. In families where substance abuse is present, children may also adopt these maladaptive coping mechanisms in an attempt to fit in, alleviate their pain, or seek attention from their parents. Thus, family pathology does not only create an environment of dysfunction but also provides the template for future behaviors, including drug addiction.

Parental marital problems can have a direct impact on children's mental and emotional well-being. When parents experience constant conflict, emotional dissatisfaction, or separation, the children in these families may experience high levels of stress, confusion, and insecurity. Marital conflict often creates an environment of instability where children do not feel safe or supported. This can lead to heightened anxiety, depression, and a sense of hopelessness. In extreme cases, children may begin to engage in substance use as a way to escape the emotional burden of witnessing parental conflict.

The negative effects of parental marital dissatisfaction are particularly pronounced when the children observe unhealthy coping strategies modeled by the parents. If a parent uses substances to cope with relationship difficulties or emotional pain, children may view substance abuse as an acceptable or necessary response to life's challenges. Over time, this can set the stage for addiction to develop in the next generation. Additionally, if the parents' marriage is marked by neglect or emotional distance, children may not receive the emotional validation and support they need to navigate life's difficulties, further exacerbating the risk of addiction.

Life dissatisfaction, whether it stems from career dissatisfaction, unmet personal goals, or feelings of inadequacy, can be a powerful catalyst for substance abuse. When individuals feel that their lives lack meaning or fulfillment, they may turn to substances as a way to fill the void. This dissatisfaction often leads to emotional numbness, self-medication, and a reliance on drugs to cope with feelings of failure, disappointment, or disillusionment. Parents who experience life dissatisfaction may be less able to provide emotional stability or guidance to their children, increasing the risk of future addiction.

Moreover, when individuals feel dissatisfied with their lives, they may also feel disconnected from others, which can lead to feelings of isolation. In such cases, addiction may serve as a means of self-soothing, allowing the individual to escape the negative emotions associated with life dissatisfaction. The cycle of addiction then perpetuates itself, as the individual turns to drugs to cope with the very emotions that are exacerbated by addiction.

The development of drug addiction is deeply influenced by family pathology, parental marital issues, and life dissatisfaction. These factors create an environment in which addiction can thrive, often leading to a cycle that affects multiple generations. To effectively address the issue of drug addiction, it is essential to consider the broader family dynamics that contribute to the problem. By understanding the interplay between family dysfunction, parental conflict, and life dissatisfaction, it becomes possible to devise more comprehensive treatment and prevention strategies that target not only the individual's addiction but also the systemic issues within the family that may be contributing to or sustaining the problem.

Literature Review

This literature review explores the connection between drug addiction and various family dynamics, including family pathology, parental marital dissatisfaction, and life dissatisfaction. Each of these factors has been shown to influence the development and continuation of substance abuse. The following studies and theoretical frameworks shed light on how these factors intersect to increase vulnerability to addiction, offering

insights into prevention and intervention strategies.

McMahon and Loxley³ (2012) discussed the role of family dysfunction in the development of substance abuse. They argue that family pathology, including poor communication, emotional neglect, and inconsistent discipline, creates an environment where children are more likely to adopt maladaptive coping mechanisms. These patterns, if not addressed, are likely to perpetuate into adulthood, increasing the risk of addiction. The study emphasizes the need for family-based interventions that focus on improving relational dynamics and emotional support within the household. So, Family dysfunction plays a significant role in creating vulnerability to drug addiction. Emotional neglect, inconsistent parenting, and a lack of support increase the likelihood of maladaptive coping strategies like substance abuse. Ducharme et al.¹ (2017) explores how parental marital conflict affects children's psychological development. Their findings show that children exposed to high levels of marital discord are more likely to develop emotional and behavioral problems, including substance abuse. These children often struggle with feelings of insecurity, depression, and anxiety, which may later manifest in addiction as a way to self-soothe. So, Marital conflict in the home contributes to emotional instability in children, which can increase the likelihood of substance use later in life. Green and Rogers² (2018) examined the relationship between life dissatisfaction and substance abuse. The study concluded that individuals who experience chronic dissatisfaction in life due to issues such as poor career fulfillment, financial stress, or personal unfulfillment are more likely to use substances as a means of coping. The study found that individuals from homes where one or both parents also exhibited signs of life dissatisfaction were particularly at risk. Thus, Life dissatisfaction, particularly in the context of unmet personal and professional goals, is a significant predictor of substance abuse. Family background, including parental life dissatisfaction, increases susceptibility. Pichardo et al.⁵ (2015), which focused on the familial patterns of addiction. The study found that children of parents who abuse drugs are at higher risk for developing similar habits, not only because of genetic predisposition but also due to the dysfunctional family environments in which they are raised. Poor parental modeling, emotional neglect, and unstable marital relationships contribute to this transmission. Thus, Family history of drug addiction, combined with dysfunctional home environments, leads to an increased risk of addiction in children. Wilson and Johnson¹¹ (2019) explored the relationship between parental marital satisfaction and adolescent substance use. Their research showed that adolescents whose parents experienced marital dissatisfaction were more likely to engage in risky behaviors, including drug use. The authors suggest that marital conflict leads to emotional neglect, which creates a void that children often attempt to fill with substances. Thus, Low marital satisfaction is strongly correlated with increased substance use in adolescents due to emotional neglect and a lack of healthy coping models. Weiss and Coombs⁹ (2016) examined how family stress, including parental discord and life dissatisfaction, contributes to addiction. They argue that stress, particularly when it is chronic or unresolved within the family unit, leads to heightened emotional dysregulation in children. Over time, these children are more likely to develop substance abuse issues as a way to manage stress and negative emotions. Thus, Chronic family stress, whether from parental marital issues or life dissatisfaction, contributes significantly to emotional instability and increases the risk of drug addiction. Williams and Anderson¹⁰ (2014) reviewed how parental involvement, or lack thereof, impacts adolescent drug use. Their study found that children whose parents experienced marital conflict and life dissatisfaction were less likely to engage in protective parenting behaviors. This lack of involvement left children vulnerable to peer pressure and substance abuse, with an increased likelihood of turning to drugs as a means of coping. So, Low parental involvement, often resulting from marital dissatisfaction, is a significant risk factor for adolescent substance abuse. Shepherd et al.⁷ (2018), discussed how family systems theory applies to drug addiction. The study posits that addiction is often a symptom of larger familial dysfunctions, where family members, particularly parents, may either enable or exacerbate the issue. Parental marital issues and life dissatisfaction can disrupt family dynamics, leading to a situation where addiction becomes a method of coping. Means, Family systems theory underscores the role of dysfunctional family dynamics, including marital dissatisfaction and unresolved life issues, in fostering an environment conducive to addiction. Thompson et al.⁸ (2020)

investigated how early family experiences, such as exposure to parental conflict or substance use, influenced substance abuse patterns in adulthood. The research confirmed that early exposure to family dysfunction increases the likelihood of addiction later in life, particularly in individuals with unresolved emotional issues stemming from their childhood experiences. Thus, Early exposure to family dysfunction, especially parental marital issues and substance use, significantly increases the risk of substance abuse in adulthood. Morales et al.⁴ (2021) reviewed multiple studies on family functioning and its relationship with adolescent drug use. The analysis concluded that family dysfunction—marked by parental marital conflict, poor emotional bonding, and unresolved life dissatisfaction—was one of the strongest predictors of adolescent substance abuse. The study also emphasized that interventions aimed at improving family dynamics could significantly reduce the risk of addiction. So, Family dysfunction, including marital issues and poor emotional connection, is a critical risk factor for adolescent drug use, highlighting the need for family-centered interventions. Roberts and Grey⁶ (2013) examined how parental drug use and marital dissatisfaction contribute to adolescent drug addiction. They found that children whose parents struggle with addiction and marital conflict are more likely to engage in substance abuse themselves. This study highlights the importance of addressing both parental addiction and family dysfunction when working to prevent adolescent substance abuse. Therefore, Parental drug use and marital dissatisfaction contribute to adolescent addiction, with the family unit playing a central role in both the onset and maintenance of drug use behaviors.

Obviously, drug addiction among youth at Ranchi (Jharkhand) has not been studied in context with family pathology, marital maladjustment and life dis-satisfaction. This justifies undertaking of the research study.

Objective

The present study intended to compare drug-addicts and normal youths in terms of family pathology, marital mal-adjustment and life dis-satisfaction.

Hypothesis

Drug addicts and normal youths work differ significantly in terms of (i) family pathology, (ii) marital mal-adjustment and (iii) life dis-satisfaction respectively.

Method of Study

Sample Used

The sample comprised of 50 drug addicts and 50 normal youths of Ranchi (Jharkhand). Drug addicts were selected from among different drug de-addiction centres of Ranchi (Jharkhand). Normal youth were either their relatives or family members. Other than the conditions required they were matched so far as practicable.

Tools Used

1. A PDS was used to seek the necessary information.
2. Family Pathology Scale by Dr. Vimala Veerraghavan and Dr. Archana Dogra was used to measure family pathology.
3. Marital Adjustment Questionnaire by Kumar P. and Rohtagi, K. was used to measure marital adjustment.
4. Life Satisfaction Scale by QG Alam and Ramji Srivastava was used to measure the life satisfaction.

Results and Interpretations

Table 01: Comparison between drug addicts and normal on family pathology measure

Respondents	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	P
Drug Addicts	50	113.52	5.37	14.34	98	<.01
Non-Drug Addict	50	98.46	5.37			

The results displayed by-01 clearly revealed that drug addicts excelled over non-drug addict in terms of manifesting higher degree of family pathology. The mean of drug-addicts on family pathology (Mean = 113.52) is quite higher than the mean of non-drug addicts (Mean = 98.46). The t-value was found significant ($t = 14.34$; $df = 98$; $p < .01$). Drug addicts often excel in family pathology compared to non-addicts because dysfunctional family environments—such as poor communication, neglect, abuse, or conflict—can contribute to substance abuse as a coping mechanism. These adverse family dynamics increase vulnerability to addiction and related psychological problems.

Table 02: Comparison between drug-addicts and normal youths in marital mal-adjustment measure

Respondents	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	P
Drug Addicts	50	13.24	5.47	8.47	98	<.01
Non-Drug Addict	50	22.56	5.52			

The results displayed by-02 clearly revealed that drug addicts excelled over non-drug addict in terms of manifesting higher degree of marital mal-adjustment. The mean of drug-addicts on marital mal-adjustment (Mean = 13.24) is lower than the mean of non-drug addicts (Mean = 22.56). The t-value was found significant ($t = 8.47$; $df = 98$; $p < .01$). Drug addicts tend to experience higher marital maladjustment because substance abuse often leads to poor communication, mistrust, conflict, and emotional instability within relationships. Addiction can cause neglect of marital responsibilities, increased domestic tension, and reduced intimacy, resulting in greater marital dissatisfaction and instability than non-addicts.

Table 03: Comparison between drug-addicts and normal youth in life dis-satisfaction measure

Respondents	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	P
Drug Addicts	50	46.47	5.30	12.14	98	<.01
Non-Drug Addict	50	59.58	5.48			

The results displayed by-03 clearly revealed that drug addicts excelled over non-drug addict in terms of manifesting higher degree of life dis-satisfaction. The mean of drug-addicts on life dis-satisfaction (Mean = 46.47) is higher than the mean of non-drug addicts (Mean = 59.58). The t-value was found significant ($t = 12.14$; $df = 98$; $p < .01$). Drug addicts often experience greater life dissatisfaction than non-addicts because addiction negatively impacts physical health, relationships, career, and self-esteem. The cycle of dependency, social stigma, and repeated failures to quit contribute to feelings of hopelessness and reduced quality of life, leading to lower overall life satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

- (i) Drug addicts excel over non-drug addict in terms of family pathology score. Thus, drug addiction is one of the major result of family pathology.
- (ii) Drug addict manifest comparatively poor marital adjustment as compared to non-drug addict people. Thus, marital maladjustment is a significant contributor to drug addiction.
- (iii) Drug addict show their dominance over non-drug addicts in terms of life dissatisfaction. Thus, life dissatisfaction is also prominent contributor to drug addiction.

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