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November 2020

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ISSN 2478 - 0278

PROCEEDINGS

First International Research Conference 2020

Department of Demography

Faculty of Arts

University of Colombo

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Identification of causes and effects of drug usage in Kuchchaveli DSD of Trincomalee District

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Introduction

Drug trafficking is a mass level business operation in the contemporary world, irrespective of developed and developing countries. Drug usage has become a major threat to the global economy in terms of medical and welfare cost. In addition, this is a major factor which determines the ratio of birth and death. According to Ritchie and Roser, (2017); alcohol and drug usage are important risk factors for early death. Approximately, 11.4 million people die prematurely annually, because of this habit. Further, over 350,000 people in the world die per annum, due to alcohol and illicit drugs overdosing. Similarly, in Sri Lanka, the annual death record due to the usage of multiple drug varieties is a remarkable amount, with numbers recording 15,521 for tobacco, 6,150 for alcohol, and 748 for illicit drugs.

Use of psychoactive substances (or drugs) is a known phenomenon in Sri Lanka since ancient times, and was traditionally used for medicinal purposes in the 'Ayurvedic' system of medicine until recent times. With the gradual development of domestic tourism, it was used for recreational purposes, especially cannabis and opium. Thereafter, its usage expanded with the arrival of synthetic and potent drugs (heroin) into the country in early 1980's onwards, among the youth (NDDCB-2018).

Sri Lanka has become one of the target markets and is used as a platform for transmitting drugs to South Asian and Australian countries by mass level drug dealers. Gradually, this has become an acute social problem in Sri Lanka, obstructing individual's development and sustainability of the nation. 81,156 persons have been arrested due to the usage of drugs in the year 2017, which is a 2 percent increase compared to the previous year (NDDCB, 2018). The Sri Lankan Government spends approximately LKR 212 billions to overcome multifarious health related issues, caused by the usage of various drugs. Moreover, a death toll of 47,000 people was recorded in 2017 (ADIC, 2017). According to the statistical Handbook of Trincomalee District (2017), approximately 1,151 people are addicted to drug usage in the Kuchchaveli DSD. This has become a recurring issue in the study area.

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Research objectives

The main objective of this study is to identify the causes and effects of the increasing trend of drug usage in Kuchchaveli DS Division in Trincomalee District, Sri Lanka. Furthermore, it is also expected to identify the social, environmental and cultural factors, caused for drug usages in the study area and to examine the strategies to mitigate such causes and its effects in terms of individual development.

Methodology

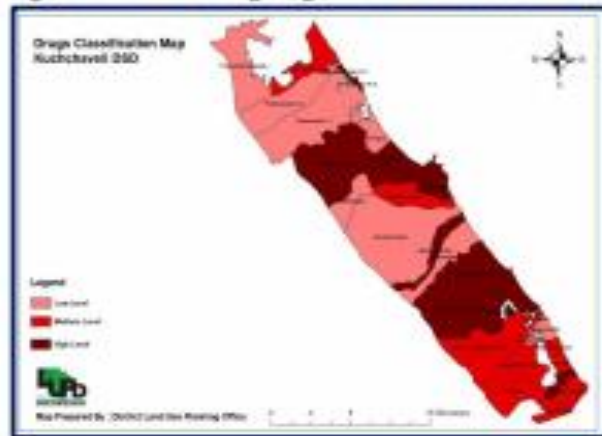
This study is based on both primary and secondary data. Snowball random sampling technique was used to collect primary data, based on the identified 70 affected households and the data was collected using structured questionnaires. In addition, interviews, discussion with focus groups and direct observation were carried out to collect the field data. Further, the researchers have learned that there are groups whose drug consumption patterns differ in relation to volume and type due to their income level, education background and cultural forces. Moreover, direct scene observations were used to collect data on the routine life of the society, social status, civic system, lifestyle, cultural and economic status. Further, the environmental scenario, landscape, vegetation cover, natural resources and weather situation have also been noted through direct observation. Key information was collected from the officers of relevant governmental and non-governmental organizations. Secondary data was collected, using existing policies, handbooks, maps, websites, police reports and scholarly articles. The collected quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed using the GIS, SPSS, MS-Office software and percentage, analytical techniques are presented using charts and diagrams.

Results and discussion

According to the findings of this study, 72 percent of the people are addicted to drug usage. Out of them, 94.08 percent are men, mostly, unmarried and between 19-45 years of age and 5.92 percent are women. East Kumpuruppity is the most affected area and has multiple social issues. *Kasippu, kallu, heroin, kancha, kancha flowers*, alcohol and cigarettes are majorly used by the dwellers of the study area. This study recommends maintaining applicable strategies and management plans for a suitable period to mitigate drug usage and its effects to enable the government to achieve its policy "Drugs free-2020".

This study identified the high, intermediate and low drug usage and consumption places, representing seven GNDs; which are exhibited in the below Figure 1.

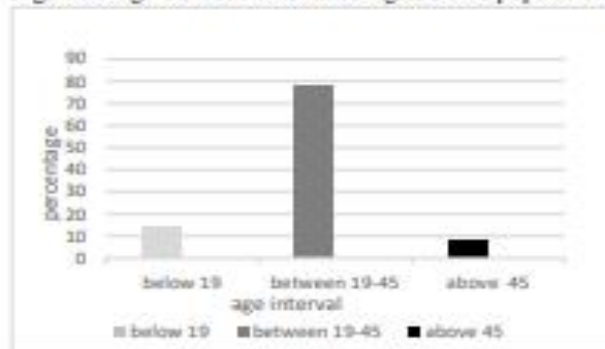
Figure 1: Pattern of drug usage in different levels in the study area



Source: - Kuchchaveli DS Division, 2018.

The major reasons for the increasing trends of drug usage in the Kuchchaveli DSD are its environmental and social factors, such as its geographical location, coastal area, Kokilai lagoon, spread of natural resources, eco-tourism activities, poor income, literacy level, mindset of the people, post-war circumstances and enrichment of fish and biggest plateau landscapes etc. Most of the drug addicts are somehow involved in illegal activities.

Figure 2: Age distribution of the drug addicted population



Source: - Sample survey, 2018.

Mostly, all the drug addicts are somehow associated with disorder(s) in terms of physical, physiological, mental health effects. Risk levels are varied, depending on the type, frequency and volume of the drug that they use. Some drug addicts suffer from chronic diseases too. In general, in Kuchchaveli DSD, the child birth ratio shows a decreasing trend, whereas death ratio is showing an increasing trend. Similarly, the cultural demolition, increase of crimes and illegal offences, economical handicapped, social changes during the tenure of tourism development in the study area, backward in school education, increase in school drop ratio, malnutrition, manpower wastage, changes in fine arts, smoking causes inconvenience to the user and others, sabotage of social development, unemployment, and hunger and starvation are some of the other direct and indirect negative impacts caused by drug usage.

Conclusion

Kuchchaveli DSD in Trincomalee District is identified as a highly vulnerable area for drug usage, especially in the Kumburupitiya East Grama Niladari Division. These habits have led to various health impacts on the inhabitants of the study area. The major reasons behind this issue are environmental and socio-economic factors. Kuchchaveli DSD is surrounded by marine resources and wild resources, so its geographical locations provide room for smuggling and transportation of drugs. In addition, unemployment, poor income and illiteracy level are mainly identified as the human factors for the increasing trend of drug usage. Hence, public awareness, education and strictly implementing existing laws are major remedial measures that could be implemented to reverse this situation.

Further, establishment of drug counselling centers; extending drug prevention, treatment and rehabilitation programmes; using religious places to preach on adverse impacts of drug usage; and encouraging the participation of all stakeholders to mitigate this habit are essential. A collective responsibility is required to overcome adverse impacts, to reduce the number of users and to restrict new entry of drugs in order to make Kuchchaveli DSD a drug free area.

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