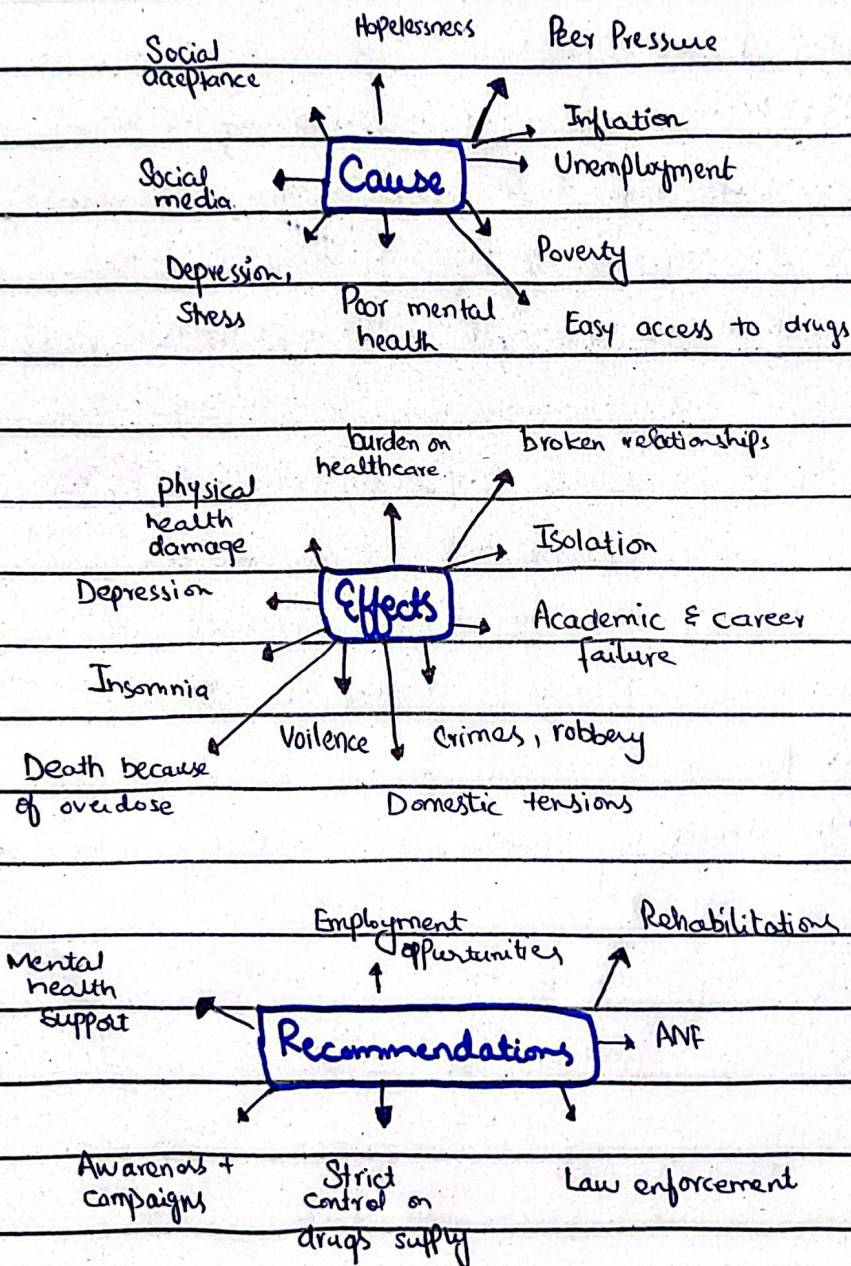


ESSAY:

Drug Abuse: A Growing Threat to Pakistan's Young Generation

Brainstorming:



Outline:

(1) Introduction

1.1) Hook (If they took all the drugs, nicotine, alcohol and caffeine off the market for six days, they'd have to bring out the tanks to control you)

1.2) Background Statement

1.3) Thesis statement: Drug abuse has emerged as a critical threat to Pakistan's young generation, driven by socio-economic pressures, easy access to drugs, and lack of preventive measures, and it needs urgent attention from both the government and the people.

(2) Body Paragraphs

(A) Understanding Drug Abuse

- Definition of drug abuse
- Types of drugs commonly used

(B) Alarming Statistics

(C) Causes:

- Peer pressure and social acceptance
- Easy access to narcotics
- Unemployment and hopelessness
- Poverty and inflation
- Stress and depression
- Glorification in social media

(D) Effects

(1) On Individual:

- Physical health deterioration
- Mental health issues
- Academic and career failure
- Risk of overdose and death

2) On Families :

- Broken relationships and violence
- Domestic tensions

3) On Society :

- Crimes increase
- Burden on healthcare
- Burden on law enforcement agencies

(E) Role of Drug Trafficking

- Border Smuggling
- Ineffective law enforcement

(F) Role of Society and Institutions

- Educational Institutions
- Awareness and Campaigns
- Media responsibility

(G) Government measures and gaps

- Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF)
- Existing laws and policies
- Poor implementation of laws
- No rehabilitation facilities

(H) Recommendations

- Strict control on Drugs Supply
- Rehab centers

- Mental health support
- Employment opportunities

(3) Conclusion

- Thesis restated
- Urgent need for collective and sustained action

ESSAY

Bill Hicks, a famous American Stand-up comedian and social critic, once said:

"If they took all the drugs, nicotine, alcohol, and caffeine off the market for six days, they'd have to bring out the tanks to control you." This particular quote reflects his sharp critique of societal dependence on these legal substances and how deeply integrated they are in modern life. Drug abuse is neither a new issue nor limited to any specific region. In recent years, it has taken a dangerous turn among Pakistan's youth. According to

the Economic Survey, 2025 **26%** of the Pakistan's population is between **15** and **29** and according to a report, millions of Pakistanis are affected by drug addiction and a large percentage of them are under the age of **30**. These growing crisis not only affects the health of individuals but also affects the relationship of individuals with their families, increase crime rates and weakens the overall social and economic structure of the country. Drug abuse has emerged as a critical threat to Pakistan's young generation, driven by socio-economic pressure, easy access to drugs, and lack of preventive measures, and it needs urgent attention from both the government and the people. If left unaddressed, it will destroy the potential of an entire generation and pose a long-term threat to national development.

Drug abuse refers to the excessive and inappropriate use of substances

used by individuals such as narcotics, stimulants, and depressants that alter a person's state of mind. It leads to addiction, depression, and harmful consequences for health and behaviour. In Pakistan, every individual has easy access to drugs and the most common drugs used by them are heroin, hashish, ICE, cocaine, ecstasy, marijuana, LSD etc. These are commonly used among youth - ICE (crystal meth) is a dangerous stimulant gaining popularity among students while LSD and ecstasy are used at parties and gatherings commonly. Prescription drugs such as painkillers, anti-depressants, and hallucinogens are commonly used without any medical supervision.

According to the **UNODC** (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), Pakistan has over **7 million** drug users, with nearly **700,000** added annually. Among those 7 million drug users, **78%** are male, while **22%** are female. Pakistan is one of the most affected countries in the world because of

the drug abuse. Cannabis is the most used drug. The rate of injection drug abuse has also increased significantly in Pakistan, sparking fears on an HIV epidemic. A 2013 report of UNODC reveals that people from the age of 15 to 64 are using prescription drugs for non-medical purposes. Furthermore, a 2021 report revealed drug abuse causes rising sharply in educational institutions, particularly in major cities in Lahore, Karachi, and Islamabad.

A main cause of drug abuse among young generation is peer pressure. A man is recognized by the company he keeps. Our youth often falls a victim to drug abuse because of the pressure from friends or the desire to fit in any specific circle. The urge to fit in the society makes them the prey of drug abuse. Drugs are sometimes considered so fascinating that many young people are drawn towards them out of curiosity, and peer

influence without realizing the long-term damages that drugs can cause to their health and future. In universities and colleges, this culture is so common and being part of such a group, that experiment with drugs, seems to be something 'cool' and 'modern'. The fear of rejection or being labelled as 'boring' or 'backward' pushes many students to try drugs, even if know the consequences.

Another main cause of our youth becoming victim of drug abuse is **easy access to narcotics**. Drug smuggling is so common now a days. Weak enforcement at borders and campuses has made drugs easily accessible to schools and colleges.

The corrupt mafias and illegal networks supply drugs to young children without any fear. Despite strict laws, drugs are easily available in rural and urban areas. Even, children now-a-days can easily access the

drugs such as ICE, cocaine and hashish near their schools, colleges, and universities. There are many online dealers, street dealers that facilitate the students even within the boundary of schools and colleges. Afghanistan, one of the largest producers of opium, further contributes to the inflow of drugs into the country - Because of the lack of surveillance, all these illegal networks are operating freely. Additionally, there is no proper monitoring systems in many institutions to check drug circulation.

Unemployment is also a major cause of drug abuse - while inflation is getting on the top with every passing day, unemployed youth is finding an alternative to overcome this tension. With rising unemployment rates, many youth experience frustration and despair - To escape this bitter reality, they take the shelter of drugs - With limited job

opportunities and degrees in their hands, many young people experience feelings of worthlessness, despair and hopelessness. This poor condition pushes them towards unhealthy coping mechanism and drugs become their only way to escape this harsh reality. While many people living in Pakistan are below the average line of poverty, lack of proper job and family pressure deepens the problems of young generation.

Poverty and inflation are also major socio-economic factor contributing to drug abuse among the youth. According to the World Bank of Pakistan, poverty rate is currently at 44%. In such a condition where man struggles for one piece of bread, inflation adds fire to the existing problems. Especially in the families with low income, poor living conditions, and lack of access to quality resources, drugs often become an escape to all these burdens.

Young people often temporarily forget their problems by taking drugs.

Even little amount of cheap drugs like hashish are used by everyday street laborers to take some relief. Along with poverty, inflation worsens the situation. As prices rise and incomes remain stagnant, it becomes difficult even for middle class to fulfil their basic needs. Resultantly, youth may turn to drug to find relief.

Social media plays a very important role in promotion of drugs. Usage of drugs is something that has been so glorified on social media that drives youth towards drug abuse. In today's competitive world, young people are strongly attracted by the social media, and to meet the standards they take drugs as a form of glorification and self medication. However, the cost of this glorification is very dangerous that it may lead to isolation and chronic stress. Thus, this stress not only acts as a initial trigger but also becomes long-term damage to recovery.

While the causes of drug abuse are prominent, it not only affects an individual but also the families of those individuals and the society. For an individuals, the damages are not limited to health, but they also face problems in their social and academic life.

Drug abuse damages the **physical health** - It weakens the immune system, damages vital organs (liver, lungs, brain) and can lead to irreversible damages. It affects the normal functioning of human. one of the serious damage is 'damage to the nervous system'. Constant and prolonged use of drugs lead to seizures, dementia, cardiac arrest, respiratory disorders and liver damage. It even can lead to severe fits and strokes - Injecting drugs with syringes and injections can sometimes transfer HIV and AIDS and even other serious infectious diseases. Thus, what begins as occasional use of relief or pleasure often turns into full-scale health crisis

Constant use of drugs affects the mental health of individuals. Those drugs that one takes to bring some relief quickly develop into psychological dependency, causing a range of cognitive diseases. It affects the normal thinking ability of individuals. One of the most common results is depression and stress. Even without taking drugs, one can not sleep properly and suffers from insomnia. They can not take the important decisions because of lack of concentration, poor thinking ability and absence of cognitive abilities. Young people become so early dependent on drugs that they can not pursue their normal life without drugs. Drugs even lead them to schizophrenia and bi-polar mental disorder and poses many other serious threats to their life.

Due to prolonged usage of drugs, they fail academically because drugs affect the neurotransmitters like dopamine and serotonin, which

regulates the emotions and normal functioning of human. overly dependence on drugs affects the academic life and career of individuals and thus they can not perform good in their academics. As addiction develops with time, it affects the normal focus and critical thinking skills. Once a student falls into this cycle of drug abuse, it becomes difficult for them to recover their academic standing.

Drug abuse not only affects the life of an individual - It also affects the relationships of that individual with their families - It leads them to **social isolation** - They become alienated from their family and their friends, leading to loneliness and worsening of situations. Sometimes, addiction of drugs lead them to show violent behaviour towards their partners which lead to **broken relationships**. It creates an atmosphere of tension, mistrust and emotional pain - Parents often experience shock and guilt upon

discovering their children's addiction. Many blame themselves, wondering where they went wrong in parenting, while others learn to understand the mental condition of their child. This often leads to the conflicting relationship between parents and their child.

Furthermore, drug abusers cause damage to the **society** as well. It affects the social fabric of the nation. As the number of drug abusers increases, society faces a rapid increase in crime ratio, weakening the normal functioning of society. One of the most important and visible impact is rise in criminal behaviour that includes robbery, theft, drug dealing and rape. Drug mafias, for their own profit, exploit the youth. Drug abuse also exploits the economy by reducing the productivity of country's most vital resources i.e. its youth. It also deepens the societal inequality, fuels poverty and drains the resources through healthcare, rehabilitation and policing.

Additionally, the widespread use of drugs in Pakistan's youth is not only because of personal or psychological factors - **Drug trafficking** networks operating within Pakistan and outside border is affecting our most important resource i.e. our youth. Because of our porous border with **Afghanistan**, many drugs especially 70% of heroin comes from there through smuggling routes particularly in KPK and Balochistan, and then those drug mafias smuggle and distribute it to other major cities like Karachi, Islamabad and Lahore etc. Social media and encrypted apps have also become a major tool for these drug mafias to advertise drugs and deliver them without being caught. Pakistan has been working along with INTERPOL to avoid these crimes related to drug trafficking. Poor law enforcement is giving advantage to these drug dealers and mafias to promote their so called illegal business.

To protect our youth from falling victim to drug abuse, it is essential for government to take some steps. But, controlling drug abuse is not solely the responsibility of government. It requires the active coordination of society and other institutions. Each one has unique role in preventing crimes.

School, colleges and universities are in direct contact with youth and they must act as a first line of defence.

Unfortunately, many institutions lack proper counselling and care and anti-drug policies. Each institution should arrange anti-drugs seminars, anti-drugs campaigns, proper counselling. There should be proper monitoring system in each campus.

Furthermore, now-a-days media has a great influence on the life of youth. Promotion of drugs in movies, dramas and music should be banned. Promotion of public service messages about the dangers of drugs and their addiction should be made.

mandatory on social media. Additionally, the advertisements of drugs should be banned and crackdown against drug mafias should be promoted. Media should take the responsibility to raise awareness campaign against drug abuse.

Government is also taking measures to overcome this hurdle of drug abuse. Government has already taken some steps but due to poor implementation they are ineffective till date. **Anti-Narcotics Force**

is the primary agency responsible for controlling crimes related to drugs. It conducts raids, seizes illegal substances and works to dismantle drug networks. It also runs campaign in school and other institutions under initiative like **'Drug-Free Pakistan'**

Additionally, there is the (Ministry of) Narcotics Control Division under the Ministry of Narcotics Control. It also coordinates with the government to tackle drug abuse. It also collaborates with UNODC to align Pakistan's effort with global standards.

Pakistan also has strict laws such as 'Control of Narcotics Substances, 1997', which criminalizes the production, sale, and use of drugs. Penalties for all these activities range from imprisonment to capital punishment for large-scale trafficking.

Despite all these efforts of government drug abuse is so common because of the **poor implementation**. There are many laws that just exist on the paper but are not enforced effectively due to corruption, political interference and limited capacity of law enforcement. There is also an issue of **lack of rehabilitation centers** - Poor rehabilitation facilities especially in rural areas causes more increase in drug abuse. Furthermore due to the social stigma, drug abuser finds it difficult to undergo rehabilitation.

Moreover, there is very limited mental health support mechanisms in public sectors. Because of this, drug addict finds no space for getting his life on normal track.

Inadequate awareness programs and poor monitoring system in institutions further worsens the situation. Thus, the government needs to adopt a more comprehensive, well coordinated strategy about the risks and symptoms of drug addiction.

To effectively tackle this issue of drug abuse among Pakistan's youth, following reforms can help prevent, reduce, and reverse this growing threat. By enhancing the surveillance on drug routes, especially along the borders of Afghanistan, by using digital monitoring system at borders especially through drones, the government can have control on illegal supply of drugs.

Government should increase the number of cost-free and state owned rehabilitation centers - Also there is a need to integrate mental support in primary healthcare systems. Government should also train psychologists and counselors for developing mental awareness campaigns.

Also, government should provide employment opportunities to reduce

frustration and hopelessness. There is also a need to offer vocational training and scholarships to high-risk groups. These recommendations, if implemented with sincerity and collaboration across all sectors, can significantly reduce drug abuse and help protect the future of Pakistan.

To conclude, drug abuse is undeniably a growing threat to Pakistan's youth. Drug abuse among youth is not a personal tragedy but a national tragedy that undermines health, education and economy of country. While factors such as peer influence, lack of awareness, and weak reforms continue to fuel the problems, the consequences are far reaching, from physical and mental deterioration to school dropouts and crimes. Despite the existence of legal laws, Pakistan's fight against drug abuse remains hampered by poor implementation. Government reforms, community involvement, and awareness campaigns must go hand in hand. Only through active measures can we protect our youth and secure safer future for Pakistan.