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UNVEILING ATTITUDES: PAKISTANI YOUNG STUDENTS' VALUE ORIENTATIONS ON ADDICTION AND ADDICTS

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Abstract

Unlike Western states, where the social factors influencing drug addiction are thoroughly investigated, Pakistani sociological research in the last few decades seems to have failed to adequately illuminate this complex issue. Theories and debates regarding the relationship of addiction to social variables, such as class and lifestyle, are well established globally. However, Pakistan's unique drug landscape calls for a nuanced, contextual exploration, recognizing the limitations of universal explanations and solutions, which is the main reason for undertaking the present study. A sample of 140 young students from the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad who were screened and not addicted to any drug was selected for the research study. The information was collected through a structured instrument prepared in Urdu for better comprehension by the respondents. The sample was a purposive one and was drawn on a quota basis, yet it represented both the undergraduate and graduate classes. The findings of the research reveal that the frequency of the use of narcotics has a positive influence on increased hatred towards addicts and there is a strong inclination among the youth to break up with such people. The present study implies that society considers habituation as a vice to be looked upon. The association of criminality with addiction presently seems to have an inadequate premise for hypothesizing. Drug abuse awareness among various cultures should be included in curricula for students by governments and universities so that risk and consequence awareness can be increased as well as avoiding substance abuse.

Keywords: Youth, Addiction, Awareness, Mental, Drug

Introduction

In the developed and relatively more industrialized Societies of the world, the delineation of social factors in drug addiction has been thoroughly documented. Theories and counter theories establishing and evaluating causal relationships between variables like addiction and social class, living Styles, or a variety of other social factors, have been propounded by many sociologists and other social scientists in such societies. However, (Zanib et al., 2024) highlighted that the sociological literature produced in Pakistan during the last two decades sheds little light on uncovering the mysteries shrouding the phenomena. The fact that a universal description of the problem, or to suggest a panacea is not possible (Abedi et al., 2024; Baumeister & André, 2024), as the diversities and variability in time and space, call for an objective examination of the local drug scene in a wider perspective. The toxic power of the plant causing hallucination or inertia has a profound impact on the entire range of human relationships (Zhou et al., 2024). The interactional patterns are either totally or partially disrupted, both (i) at multiple levels between parents and their offspring or employers and employees, and (ii) at a horizontal level between spouses or friends, co-workers, etc (Rundle et al., 2024). As well as according to Abdullahi et al. (2024) social values and traditional morality patterns enshrined in mores are indeed the most important deterrents against the abuse of drugs and narcotics. Envisioning the attitudinal awareness of the educated youth, an important source helpful for the development of a suitable signaling mechanism, the presence study explicitly describes the non-addict youth of Pakistan confirming strictly the dominant normative behavior patterns of the existing social structure. Further research into this trend revealed that there exist certain variables that increase the risk of substance abuse. Substance abuse has been more common among younger

generations. For a lifetime, abuse is higher in the age range of 18 to 29 years for both males and females. The age group attained by university students lies within this range and are therefore also at risk of substance abuse (Çirakoğlu & Işin, 2005). Approximately nine million individuals are abusing drugs in Pakistan. Two million of these users are estimated to be young people between 15 and 25 years old (Ashraf Sajid et al., 2020). The alarming trend, especially among college and university students, poses severe social and health consequences because the drugs of addictive potential can alter the relevant brain neurons by changing sensations of pleasure and reward (Adibelli & Olgun, 2016). These include opioids, hashish, hallucinogens, cocaine, amphetamines, sedatives, and stimulants. Tobacco is one of the most widely abused drugs in the world today and its user base contains males as well as females (Ashraf Sajid et al., 2020). It is interesting to note that media influence has increased the use of cocaine among the female population, and it is on the rise day by day. The prevalence of these drugs raises an alarm and calls for some meaningful interventions to check the destruction that goes along with substance abuse among Pakistan's youth (Kanwal et al., 2021). Discussing the significance of the present study, it can be said that this group of youths who use alcohol or any other illegal drug leads to illegal activities and attracts the attention of legal authorities to the extreme youth drug users. The present survey has been conducted to motivate other universities and guidance centers within the country for better information regarding the consumption of drugs and alcohol for planning preventive programs. The present study explores attitudes and practices regarding alcohol and illicit drug use among university students studying at the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad. The present study involves an investigation into attitudes about drug addiction and addictions among university students.

Problem Statement

Illicit drug use in university students has emerged as a serious concern leading to being involved in illegal activities and unwanted legal attention. Given the gravity of this problem, still, no extensive information is available that deals with the attitudes and practices regarding substance use among university students in Pakistan. Lack of such data prevails in the context of the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad, regarding the prevalence, patterns, and correlations of illicit drug use among its students. Therefore, with the knowledge gap, there could be no sensible preventive program and intervention for a student, which poses a risk to students' health, well-being, and academic success.

Significance of Study

The significance of this research is to provide university and counseling centers with valuable insights into developing targeted preventive programs that will ultimately reduce substance use in such institutions, allowing for a healthier academic environment.

Research Objectives

- 1- To examine the concept of behavioral awareness of educated youth, which will help in developing an appropriate signaling mechanism.
- 2- To clearly describe the attitude of unaccustomed youth of Pakistan who strongly confirm the dominant behavior patterns of the existing social structure.
- 3- To identify the socio-economic status of drug-addicted students in universities to assess the real reasons behind drug addiction.

Research Questions

1. What attitudes and practices regarding alcohol and illegal drugs exist among the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad, students?
2. What is the prevalence and pattern of substance use among university students?
3. What is responsible for negative attitudes towards drug addiction and addictions among students?

Literature Review

Drugs are chemicals whose properties, by chance, alter the biological function of the body and thus change most of the physical and mental processes. More specifically, drugs fall into two broad categories: first, medically prescribed drugs that, under medical prescription, are utilized in treating diseases, and second, non-medical drugs that are administered for other purposes (Javed et al., 2006). It therefore follows that even though medically approved drugs may be beneficial for therapy purposes; non-medicinal substances may be injurious with severe health implications. Adibelli & Olgun, (2016) stated the intentional consumptive use of drugs for treatment or pleasure indeed gives importance to being aware of the consequences involved with such intake, and responsible use of drugs should be encouraged. Zaman et al., (2024) indicated that parents should be able to pay attention and identify their children's potential signs of substance abuse or other hidden issues with modifications in their behavior and physical health. According to Shafiq et al. (2006), it should be brought to attention: sudden extreme weight loss, loss of appetite, breathing difficulties, fatigue, increased desire for solitude, frequent requests for money, unusual happiness in isolation, prolonged sleeping, laziness, pale complexion, tremors, stomach issues, especially constipation, disturbances in work and studies, a decreased interest in the activities performed in the daytime, red eyes, unclear speech, and dark circles under eyes. Therefore, Zanib et al. (2024) stressed that if a child has already started such behavior, the parents can note down the instances and promptly seek professional help to guide the child. The common stimulants for illegal usage are stress and other forms of unhappiness and depression attributed to various personal or professional issues, peer influence, desire for a modern lifestyle, unemployment, lack of parental guidance, boredom, curiosity, and easy access (Zhou et

al., 2024). The main reasons for this alarming increase in drug abuse in Pakistan are tacit support from influential people, the wealthy, and the powerful, along with the availability of drugs at relatively low rates. Pakistan is on two sides of the same coin, as it imports and exports drugs. This is where an alarming 25-44% of Pakistani students indulge in illegal drug use—a cause and concern that urgently demands to be dealt with (Zaib Masih et al., 2019). According to various research (Abedi et al., 2024; Ahmed et al., 2020; Ali & Nadia, 2022; Zaib Masih et al., 2019), drug abuse among students tends to show a wide disparity by gender, as more women tend to reveal lower rates of substance use compared to men. At the same time, according to Adibelli & Olgun, (2016), students report alarmingly high numbers of drug abuse, and the main stimuli are hopelessness, anxiety, pressure from friends, and psychological distress, along with marijuana, hashish, heroin, opium, alcohol, and cocaine as the most widely used substances. Interestingly, there is a higher propensity for drug abuse among males than their female counterparts, whereas students undertaking education in the private sector have a higher rate of drug abuse compared to those undertaking training in the government sector (Ashraf Sajid et al., 2020). Boarding students characteristically possess many desirable traits such as punctuality, amicability, truthfulness, and responsibility that match well with compatible characters. Living in hostels helps develop social skills through harmony in their activities with diverse individuals, thereby enriching their tolerance and adaptability. Such conditions prepare them to meet life's challenges effectively. However, the hostels indeed house a wide variety of students who might encourage or influence other students to indulge in drug abuse (Shafiq et al., 2006). Hasan et al. (2021) discussed that substance abuse among college students has been on the rise, not just because of academic stress, but perhaps due to peer influence, curiosity, a desire for popularity, and easy access to such

substances. A study conducted by Jan et al. (2023) found that males are more vulnerable to substance use, especially in a hostel setting. To gauge the severity and adverse effects of substance use, a study by Abedi et al. (2024) was conducted among professional male students staying in boarding facilities. Based on the research findings, cannabis, and tobacco formed the most abused substances among the students at government engineering colleges. In addition, the study by Çirakoğlu & Işin, (2005) revealed that male engineering college students who lodged in the hostels exhibited a much greater level of substance abuse.

Hypotheses of the Study

1. Young university students will always oppose frequent narcotics usage.
2. Young university students will have reduced sympathy for a relation who is an addict of narcotics.
3. Young university students will perceive addicts to have low socioeconomic status.
4. Young university students will view addicts as having low social status.
5. Addictive drugs will reduce the socio-physical life patterns of addicts.
6. Addicts will depend mainly on illegal or unhealthy sources to finance their addiction.
7. The youth in university will assist in rehabilitating drug addicts.

Research Methodology

A sample of 140 young students from the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad, was selected for this study using a non-probability, purposive sampling design. The inclusion criteria specified that participants must not be addicted to any substance. To maximize representativeness, a quota sampling framework was employed, allocating equal proportions of undergraduate and graduate students within the sample. This stratified approach facilitated comparative analysis across academic levels. Data collection was facilitated through a rigorously developed, Urdu-language questionnaire incorporating a Likert scale response format. Instrument

validity was established through pilot testing with a convenience sample of ten university students (n=10), followed by expert review and revision by academic faculty. Reliability analysis utilizing Cronbach's Alpha coefficient (α) via SPSS software ensured internal consistency across all items. A threshold of $\alpha \geq 0.7$ was established as the criterion for item retention. The finalized questionnaire was then administered to participants through a self-completion survey design, with respondents invited to complete the instrument at their leisure. Completed questionnaires were subsequently retrieved. This study's methodology employed a mailed questionnaire technique, leveraging the advantages of self-administered surveys to optimize respondent participation and data quality. The study was designed to generate sufficient data to postulate a few hypotheses on the social causation and effects of addiction. The deductions rendered after this write-up are tentative and subject to verification on a cross-cultural basis. The analysis involved descriptive statistics on the interrelation between the socioeconomic status of addicts and their fellow's perceptions of them. There is no special justification for concentrating on non-addict young students in this paper to prove their general social orientation towards addicts and addiction. However, it was expected that interesting data would be generated by this miniature study, to undertake a more comprehensive and exhaustive analysis on cross-cultural lines, to uncover a wide range of indicators of drug addiction. The attitudes of non-addict young students are noteworthy in so far as these reflect strong disapproval of the knowledge of the use of plant or toxic substances.

Results and Discussion

Attitudes of the young University students towards narcotics usage practices were obtained by ascertaining their reaction to the knowledge of the frequency by the user and are tabulated below.

Table 1
Attitude/Reaction of the Young University Students towards Frequency of Narcotics Usage

Frequency of use	No Response		No Reaction whatsoever		Dislike		Dis-couraging		Awesome		Hatred		Total
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
Seldom, less than once in a month	-	-	20	14	36	26	56	40	6	4	22	16	100
Regular, but Seldom (frequency =roughly weekly)	3	2	8	6	8	6	48	34	56	40	17	12	100
Regular, but Seldom (frequency =roughly Daily)	3	2	8	6	6	4	11	8	31	22	81	58	100
Always under its influence	6	4	8	6	-	-	6	4	11	8	109	78	100

The data presented in Tables 1 and 2 amply demonstrate that the frequency of the use of narcotics has a positive influence on increased hatred against addicts. This conforms to some earlier assertions. [Ahmed et al. \(2020\)](#) reported the prevalence of a high degree of humility influence of the addict population of Pakistani youth on their relatives, friends, neighbors, and coworkers. [Zaman et al. \(2024\)](#) strongly dispelled the sociological inferences of the alleged prevalence of social approval for the vice in Pakistan, as documented in some Western sociological literature. The data in Table 2 below exhibit the reaction of the young university student population to the sudden knowledge of certain sets of acquaintances or relatives and describe their attitudes toward the different sets of users, viz, seldom users and those who are always under the influence of narcotic drugs. A strong inclination has been observed among the young respondents for breaking even the relationships with an addict upon knowing the practice of the vice, varying indeed with the closeness of the relationship with him. Barring the incidence of ambivalence at the public, enforcement, or policy level which has its own sociologically significant implications, it can be safely assumed that addiction is a vice normally looked upon by

society in general and the younger generation in particular.

Table 2

Sudden Knowledge about the Addiction of a Relation who is Always under its Influence

Relationship	Reaction on Breaking Off the Relationship Thereafter											
	No Relationship		Confine only to obligatory meetings		Bitter relationship not such before		but relationship as such as before		Bitter but relationship matter		Does not No Response	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Near Relatives	102	73	21	15	11	8	6	4	-	-	-	-
Close Friends	98	70	28	20	8	6	6	4	-	-	-	-
Acquaintance	62	44	42	30	25	18	8	6	-	-	3	2
Employer/ Boss	22	16	73	52	17	12	7	5	17	12	4	3
Subordinate/ employee	39	28	43	31	18	13	20	14	14	10	6	4

The theory of addiction with deviant behavior and mental disorders propounded by [West & Brown \(2014\)](#) and numerous other studies in several countries and cultures establish its generality. These investigations tend to exhibit that addiction is concentrated in certain areas of cities in which other social problems, including adult crime and juvenile delinquency, are also frequent, and have a direct bearing on crime. Although an attempt has not been made at developing or testing hypotheses because of the inherent limitations of the sample and the design of this study, an effort was, however, made during the present study to ascertain popular awareness to affirm, whether the young, educated groups perceive the social class relationship with addiction. The data on the number of characteristics of the addict population has never come forward. It has, however, been frequently speculated and in Pakistan, too, the socio-economic status of the addict population has generally been described speculatively.

Table 3

Perception of the Students about the socioeconomic status (SES) of the Addicts

S.E.S. Level	Addict Population Composition as Perceived											
	All		Dominant		Majority		Few		None		No Response	
Age Group	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Young Low SES	3	2	42	30	59	42	36	26	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	14	10	56	40	56	40	6	4	8	6
Young Middle SES	-	-	13	9	36	26	77	55	8	6	6	4
Other	4	3	3	2	29	21	80	57	18	13	6	4
Young High SES	8	6	34	24	52	37	22	16	14	10	10	7
Other	10	7	34	24	36	26	38	27	8	6	14	10

The majority of the addicts (young addicts: 42 percent) were perceived to belong to the lower social stratum, while most young addicts were perceived by 36 percent. In contrast, 55 percent of respondents perceived few young addicts belonging to the middle class. These results may be due to the bias inherent in the design of the study, which by and large comprised the middle class, for the respondents were drawn from a professional institution relatively lower on the occupational prestige scale. The literature on social causation produced by generations of sociologists devoted a large portion of efforts to devising and testing formulations about how and why lower-class life patterns contribute to higher rates of addiction. Although, as suggested by [Tariq Khan & Jabeen \(2022\)](#), the differentiating role of family life of the addicts may be strongly operating in either case, the popular perceptive knowledge of the youth on the SES relationship contradicts the basic Premise. As illustrated by [Krüger \(2024\)](#) there is a need to estimate the discrepancy between criminal offenses which were officially recorded and those which were committed. Perception of the student population obtained during these investigations seems to suggest, as described by [Tabrizi et al. \(2024\)](#), that such concepts are fruitful only in developing the understanding and one must always be clear on what the requirements are for demonstrating that fancies of mind have some relationship to evidence gleaned from the real world. As for the perceived status of the addicts in comparison to a member of their respective SES group, the young student population

predominantly exhibited their inclination to place the addicts lower on the SES ladder than their non-addict brethren.

Table 4
The attitude of the Young University Students towards Social Status of the Addicts

Status in Comparison with the SES group of the Addict	No Response		Yes		No	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Lower than the corresponding SES within the SES Fraternity	3	2	120	86	17	12

The data confirms earlier contention that addiction induces a strong social reaction to which the young youth are no exception, as forcefully exhibited by Faraz & Hyder (2024). With two percent in the 'no response' category 86 percent form a high majority to describe an addict as 'lower' in status than a non-addict brethren within that very SES bracket. The data describing the perception of students about the influence of addiction on socio-physical life patterns, given in Table 5 below, demonstrated a high inverse social relationship with such social interactions.

Table 5
Influence of Addictive Drugs on Socio-Physical Patterns of Addicts

Relationship	Extent of Influence											
	Very High		High		Low		Very Low		None		No Response	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Family	67	48	39	28	28	20	6	4	-	-	-	-
Marital	67	48	42	30	15	11	6	4	4	3	6	4
Work	56	40	31	22	39	28	11	8	3	2	-	-
Individual	70	50	48	34	18	13	-	-	4	3	-	-
Financial												
Physical Capability	71	51	45	32	17	12	-	-	7	5	-	-
Mental Capability	77	55	32	24	17	12	6	4	4	3	4	3
Social Relations	35	25	29	21	48	34	17	12	7	5	4	3
Religious Performance	104	74	22	16	-	-	8	6	6	4	-	-

It may be noticed that 48 percent perceived a very high influence of addiction on those addicts who are always under its spell, on family and marital relations of addicts whereas 74 percent thought that the religious performance of such addicts is highly influenced. It is noteworthy that most of the 34 percent thought that such addicts 'Lowly' influence social relations. As to physical and mental capabilities, 52 and 56 percent responded respectively described a 'very high' influence. The individual financial position of such addicts

was described to be highly influenced by a 50 percent strong non-addict student population. Similar data about habituating individuals with a decreasing regularity in usage was obtained, which exhibited a correspondingly less influence on the capabilities of such addicts. The data presented in Table 6 below demonstrate a high perception rate for the relationship of anti-social activities with addiction.

Table 6
Sources/Methods Used for Collecting Money to Purchase Addictive Material

Source	Perceptive Knowledge on Frequency of Source											
	Always		Usually,		Seldom		Also, Possible		Never		No Response	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
a) By Appropriating: Family Income												
i) no influence on family budget	20	14	35	25	29	21	25	18	25	18	6	4
ii) family budget badly influenced	28	20	77	55	21	15	14	10	-	-	-	-
b) By Begging:	14	10	22	16	38	27	60	43	6	4	-	-
c) By Anti-social Activities:												
i) borrowing on false pretexts	3	2	60	43	35	25	39	28	3	2	-	-
ii) resorting to antisocial stealing	14	10	25	18	48	34	53	38	-	-	-	-
iii) by prostitution	10	7	18	13	31	22	53	38	14	10	14	10

The habituation of addicts has been perceived by 54 and 20 percent of respondents to have been supported respectively 'usually' and 'always' by appropriating family finances burdening the financial budget of the family, whereas 44 and 28 percent of them considered that the addict's resort respectively 'seldom' and 'also possible' to begin. Borrowing on false pretexts is as 'usually' reported by 44 percent, whereas 38 percent indicated a 'possibility' of associating addiction with stealing as much as perceiving a 'possibility' of appropriating finances through an anti-social activity like indulging in prostitution. Generally, the trend indicated conforms with the findings reported in various studies. However, one must take into account the evidence and postulations suggesting that criminology does not provide as firm a basis for estimating expected offenses as the vital statistics (LaFree, 2021). Further, despite sufficient evidence in support of this popular speculative assertion, there is considerable disagreement with explanations

of the causal relations and the associational patterns of the addict criminals. Attitudes of the Young University students towards rehabilitation of addicts were also ascertained and the data collected were tabulated and are presented in Table 7 below:

Table 7

The attitude of the Young University Students towards Rehabilitation of Addicts

Methods of Rehabilitation	Yes		No		No Response	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Clinical Treatment	105	75	25	18	10	7
Mental Treatment	129	92	7	5	4	3
Punitive Measures	123	88	14	10	3	2
Public Support Essential for Punitive Measures	127	91	7	5	6	4

The present study, restricted to the attitudinal awareness of the young generation, does not pretend to offer worthwhile explanations of the complex social relationships and social causation. The attitude found to have been obtained among the young university student population expressly demonstrates the indulgence of addicts in anti-social activities. This conforms with the findings obtained by numerous social scientists (Ain et al., 2021; Ali & Nadia, 2022; Jan et al., 2023; Kanwal et al., 2021), who postulated that addicts have been recruited more from among persons with prior criminal records and that the involvement in crime after addiction is not a direct effect of the drug use. Gottfredson (2021) also observed that many addicts did not have a criminal record either before or after addiction. Table brought 92 and 76 percent out to favor 'respectively 'mental' and 'clinical' treatment of addicts.

Conclusion

In light of the first objective of the study that was to examine the concept of behavioral awareness of educated youth, which will help in developing an appropriate signaling mechanism, it has been said that admitting the limited availability of information about Pakistani society, the development of knowledge is extremely essential for devising suitable strategies for creating a healthier, more productive and ideal society enunciated in the holy teachings. Although as large as 23

percent of respondents turned out to be the 'hardcore', who, given the certificate from the respondents having never indulged in addiction, could be taken by inference as the 'addict' population at the campus, since the 'hardcore' could be attributed to other sources as well, such an influence would be unjustified. There, however, seems to be only an 'insignificant' incident of habituation at the campus, mainly because the student body in a rather 'low' placed profession on the occupational prestige scale, is drawn from middle-class educated or farm elites, or the enlightened group. For the achievement of the second objective, the data on the social class these students belong to were also obtained, which although not reported here, exhibit confirmation of these assertions. However, a factual situation could only become available after thorough drug abuse screening or surveying of the student population. The attitudes of the young students toward addictions and addiction obtained during the present study tend to exhibit a favorable climate for making a vigorous effort at motivating public opinion effectively and advantageously to enhance the efforts at enforcement and for the eradication of the vice. The deductions that may be postulated from the information generated by this miniature study are tentatively enumerated below.

1. With higher the frequency of the use of narcotics, the increased hatred among young students against habituating individuals, regardless of the closeness of association or relationship, leads to infer that habituating is regarded by society as a vice to be looked upon.
2. The observations of the young and 'relatively enlightened' population suggest insignificant addiction occurrence among the middle class, establishing both inverse and direct correlations of addiction with socio-economic status. It may, therefore, be deduced that the incidence of addiction increases towards both the poles on the SES scale.

3. There is strong disapproval of the vice among the members, particularly among the middle-class educated and farming elite or the enlightened group in society.
4. The differentiating role of family may have been contributing to higher rates and higher frequency of addiction. It may, therefore, be inferred that 'family', 'social group', and 'peers, may be thoroughly probed to affirm a postulation.
5. The association of criminality with addiction presently seems to have an inadequate premise for hypothesizing. More elaborate forerunning studies may be planned to entitle to a worthwhile postulation.

Recommendations

To address addiction effectively, future studies must pursue both inverse and direct correlations between an addict's socio-economic status, and the influence of family, social groups, and friends on the rate of addiction. Prevention programs should concentrate more on high-risk groups, while middle-class educated and farming elites may be part of the anti-addiction campaigns. Interventions based on family and community efforts that create social disapproval towards addiction must be initiated. Policymakers need to understand that SES follows an inverse relationship with addiction so that appropriate resource allocation can be made. Research needs to be taken as mixed methods, basis longitudinal studies' evidence, and social network analysis as applied in Social Learning Theory and the Theory of Planned Behavior. Such research questions will account for aspects like family dynamics concerning socioeconomic attitudes that have a bearable impact on opinions about addiction and the effectiveness of such interventions conducted at the community level to significantly reduce incidents of addiction, which would then inform evidence-based strategies to reduce the impact of addiction.

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