

# Patterns and Consequences of Drug Abuse Problems at Workplace

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## **Acknowledgement**

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# **Patterns and Consequences of Drug Abuse Problems at Workplace**

**Haider Ali, Riffat Sadiq**

**Workplace against Drug Abuse (WADA), a project of Drug Free Nation**

## **Abstract**

Drug abuse problems severely hit the economy of Pakistan that resulted in poor work on the part of employees, incidents at workplaces, wastage of time and material and loss of productivity. Therefore, the objective of this survey was to examine the patterns and consequences of drug abuse problems at workplaces. For this purpose, 150 employees having drug abuse problems from 17 different organizations of Karachi city were interviewed. Having their consent, survey forms were filled up by researchers to get information regarding demographics characteristics, their patterns of drug abuse at workplaces and its consequences they and their employers were facing. Results reveal that among 150 drug abusers, most of the abusers were taking drugs either in the washroom or in the cafeteria of their organizations. They preferred to take drugs in official break time, sitting with their colleagues. Cannabis was most preferred drug and smoke was mode of drug intake of most of the abusers. As far as consequences of drug abuse are concerned, employees accepted to impact total productivity of their organizations, committed mistakes and wasted raw material. Results also revealed slow speed of their work, impaired quality of work, dissatisfaction of their employers. Some of drug abuse employees quarreled with their colleagues and became cause of incident at their workplaces. Their earning scale was also declined after indulging in addiction. The present survey highlights the impact of drug addiction not only on employees but also on the productivity of organizations.

**Key words:** Drug abuse problems, workplaces, productivity, poor work, economy

# Introduction

Drug abuse is a chronic disease which is characterized by repetitive behavior or craving for drugs despite knowing harm. It also indicates the impaired control over drug use. In fact, drug addiction does not only affect the addict but also disturbs families, communities and whole society. People are addicted to both legal (prescribed medicine and painkillers) and illegal drugs like heroin, cannabis etc. Frequent use of all kinds of drug has profound impact on human body and mind that also destroys his/her ability to think rationally and to work in productive way.

It is a great misfortune that all kinds of drugs are easily available any where, any time such as educational institutes, shops, and home and even workplaces that make it easiest access for every one to experiment drugs. Researches have been conducted to see the prevalence of drug abuse and its impact on families and societies and economy as well. Addictive behaviors in employees of any organization decrease the output and are hindrance in further achievement.

A study conducted by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (1997) revealed that drug has affected all professions. The highest level of addiction was seen in business and repair services, retail trade, personal services, wholesale trade, non-durable and durable good manufacturing as well. The below average level of addiction was seen in transportation and communication services, financial, insurance and real estate services, professional services and public administration. This study suggested a workplace intervention program to overcome this disease and to bring good results.

Drug abuse problems have association with absenteeism from work, decreased chance of promotion and increased risk of unemployment. Moreover if an addict loses his job, he seems to be involved in illegal activities to take drugs that result in severe crime and that cost society has to bear. International Labor Office (ILO) and the Commission of the European Communities (1994) examined drugs and alcohol in the European workplace. A sample of 237 respondents from employers, enterpriser and workers' organizations provided information on drug and alcohol uses. According to that study, more than half of the sample reported specific performance impairments and absences from work as a result of drug-related problems. The most frequent problems related to drugs and alcohol were impaired performance, absence from work, lateness, disciplinary problems, intoxication at work, and dismissal.

United States Department of Labor (1990) estimated that American business and industry is paying a cost of \$75 billion to \$100 billion annually owing to drug use in the workplace. Further cost is paying in term of waste of time, accident and health care.

Above mentioned studies highlighted the impact of drug abuse problems on individual's employment status, society and as well as the economy of country. It is evident that employers and organizations bear loss of productivity and poor work owing to drug abuse workers. Though, Pakistan has become the worst victim of drug trade in South Asia, therefore, these types of studies also essential for this

country. Approximately, there are 6 million people are addicted to different kinds of drugs in Pakistan. For this purpose, the present survey has been designed to examine the patterns and consequences of drug abuse problems at workplaces in the biggest city of Pakistan. This survey will be beneficial for highlighting the severe impact of drug addiction on economy and total productivity of Pakistan and implementing Drug Free Workplace Program to fight drug abuse problems at workplaces.

# Methodology

First of all, a survey form was designed by the researchers for the present study. It comprises on 25 items which were categorized in the following;

- a. **7** items measure demographic characteristics of drug abuse employees such as; name, age, educational level, marital status, employment status, socio-economic status and residential area
- b. **6** items measure patterns of drug abuse problems at workplaces such as; place and timing of drug intake, drug partner, mode of drug intake, sharing syringes, most preferred drug
- c. **12** items measure consequences of drug abuse problems at workplaces such as; lateness and irregularity at workplace, slow speed of work, quality of work effected, poor impact on productivity, cause of incident at workplace, quarrel with colleagues, absence from work, committing mistakes, wastage of material, satisfaction of supervisor and decline in income

In order to collect data, one hundred and fifty (150) male drug abusers employed in 17 different organizations of Karachi city were approached following cluster sampling technique. They were told all research ethics, like responsibility of the researcher to maintain confidentiality pertaining to personal identification and name of organizations where they were working and as well as about the benefit of the survey to highlight the bad impact of drug addiction.

After having their consent, survey forms were filled up by the researcher (following interviewing method) to get information regarding demographics and as well as to have drug abuse related history, patterns of drug intake and consequences they and their organizations had to face. Finally, frequencies and percentages were calculated to see the prevalence of drug abuse problem, patterns and its impact on employees and on the environment/ productivity of organizations as well.

# Results

Data was statistically analyzed in term of demographic characteristics of drug abuse employees, patterns and consequences of drug abuse problems at their workplaces.

## 1. Demographic characteristics of drug abuse employees

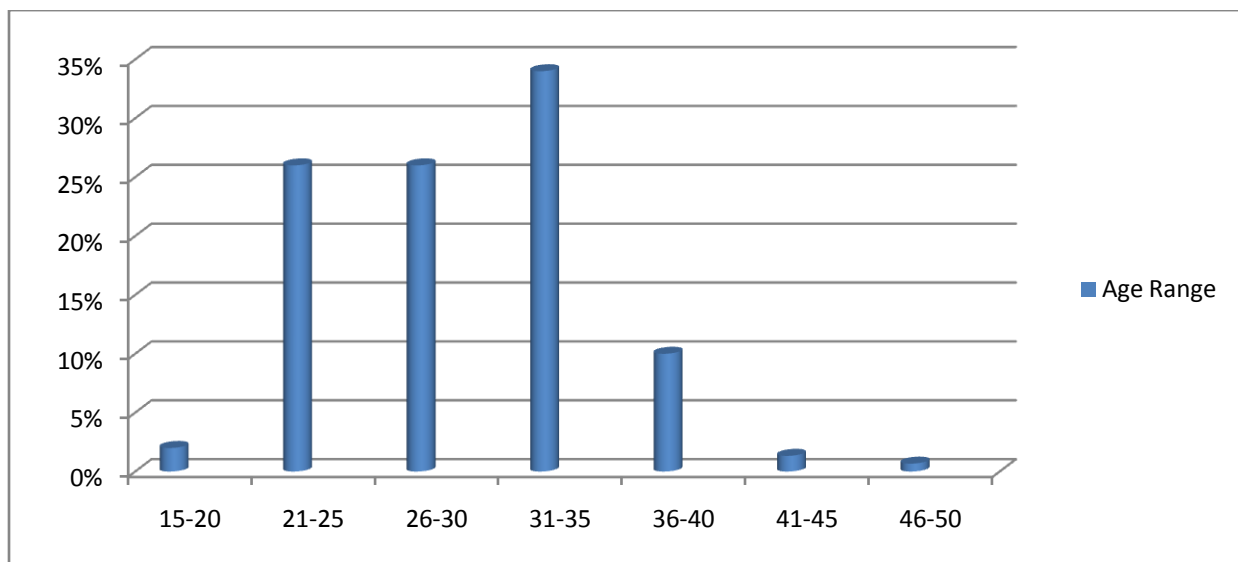
- a- Age Ranges
- b- Educational level
- c- Marital Status
- d- Socio-economic Status

**Table: 1**

Results reveal that most of the drug abusers (34%) were between 31 to 35 years old. 26% were between 21 to 25 and 26 to 30 years. 10% of them were 36 to 40 years old and 2% were between 15 to 20 years. 1.5% were between 41 to 45 years and only 0.5% were 45 to 50 years old.

Age Ranges	Frequencies	Percentage
15-20	3	2%
21-25	39	26%
26-30	39	26%
31-35	51	34%
36-40	15	10%
41-45	2	1.33%
45-50	1	0.67%

**Figure 1- Ages Ranges**



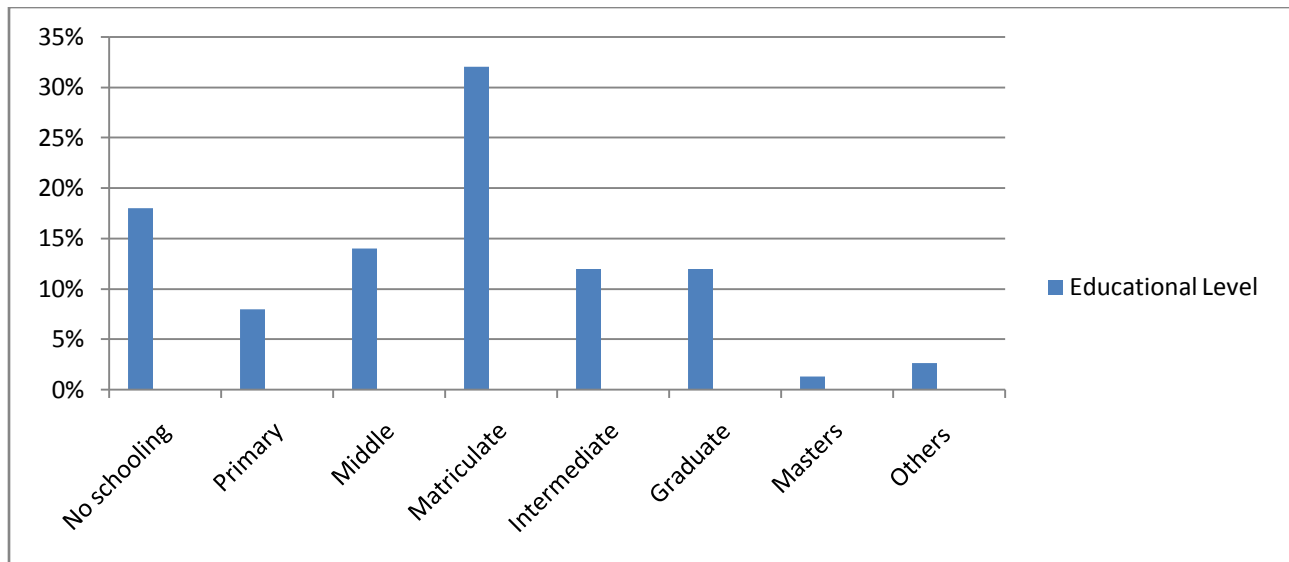


**Table: 2**

Among 150 drug abusers, 32% were matriculate, 14% were middle, and 12% were intermediate and graduate as well. Furthermore, 8% of them got education of primary level, 1.5% were masters and 3% were having professional degree. Though, 18% drug abuse worker never attended any school.

<b>Educational Level</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
No schooling	27	18%
Primary	12	8%
Middle	21	14%
Matriculate	48	32%
Intermediate	18	12%
Graduate	18	12%
Masters	2	1.33%
Other	4	2.67%

**Figure 2- Educational Level**

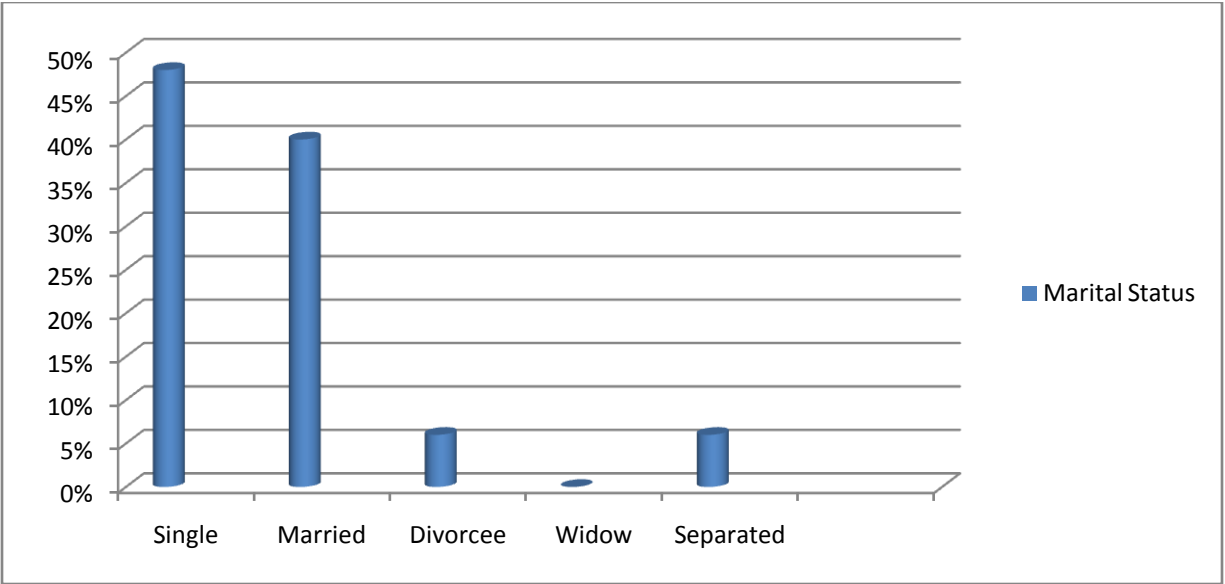


**Table: 3**

Results also reveal that 48% drug addicts were single whereas, 40% were married. Furthermore, 6% were divorcee and 6% were living separately from their life partner.

<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
Single	72	48%
Married	60	40%
Divorcee	9	6%
Widow	0	0%
Separated	9	6%

**Figure 3-Marital Status**

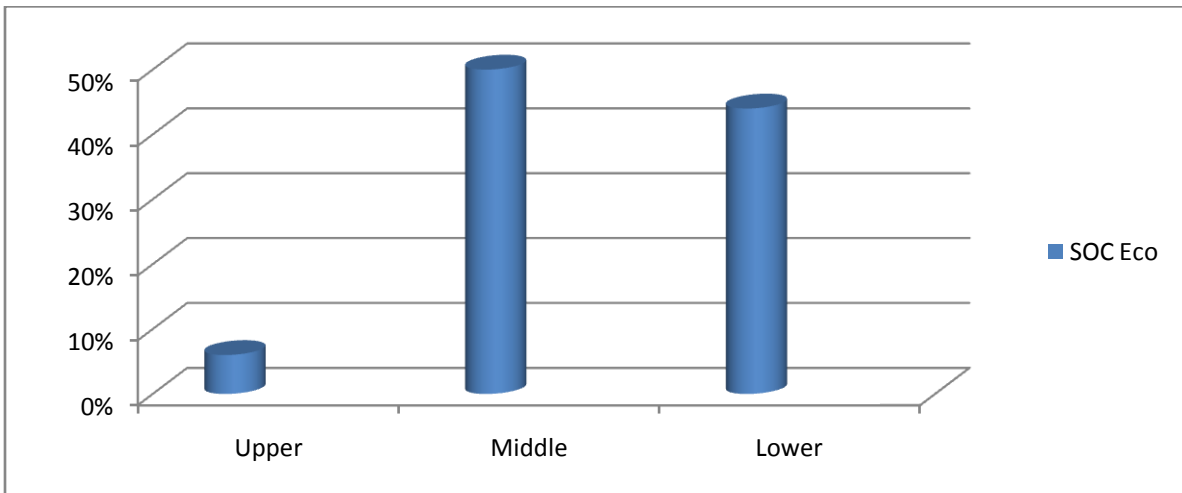


**Table: 4**

Among drug abuse employees, 50% were belonging to middle class family, 44% were from lower class family. Only 6% belonged to upper class.

Socio economic Status	Frequencies	Percentages
Upper	9	6%
Middle	75	50%
Lower	66	44%

**Figure 4- Socio economic Status**



## 2. Patterns of Drug Abuse Problems

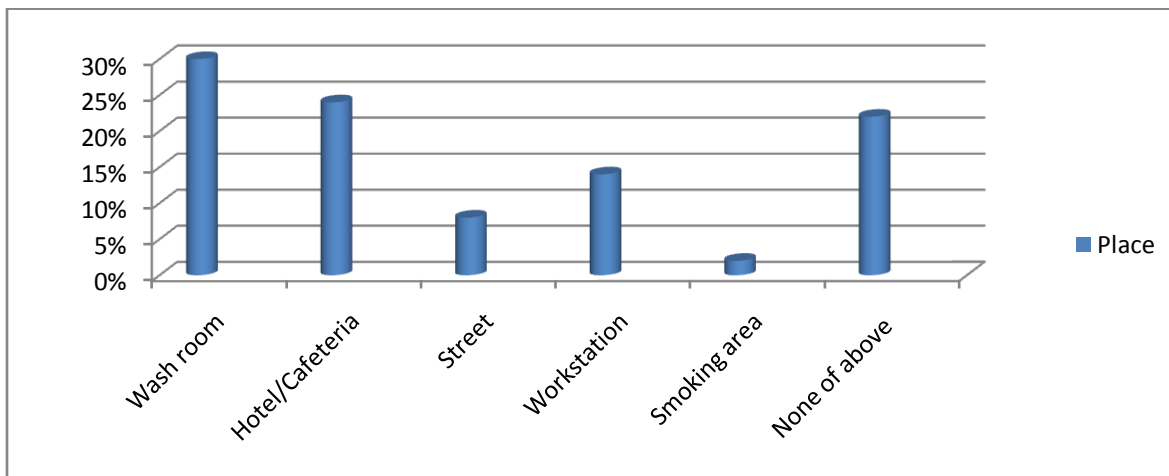
### a. Place of taking drug:

Results reveal that 30% drug addicts take drugs in washroom of their workplaces, 24% go to cafeteria or hotel nearby their organization. Approximately 14% drug addicts take drugs at workstation, 8% sitting in the street and 2% go to smoking area. Among them 22% abuse drugs either at home or nearby home.

**Table: 5**

Place of taking drugs	Frequencies	Percentages
Wash room	45	30%
Hotel/Cafeteria	36	24%
Street	12	8%
Workstation	21	14%
Smoking area	3	2%
None of above	33	22%

**Figure: 5**



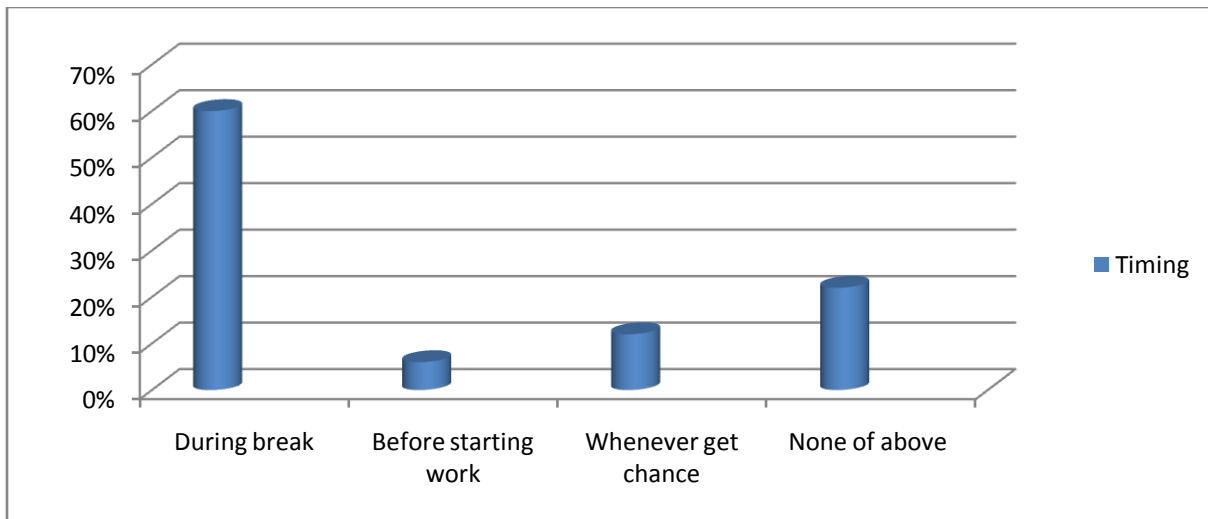
### Timing of drug intake:

Almost 60% drug addicts take drug during break time at their workplaces, 6% use drugs before starting work, whereas 12% abuse drugs whenever they get chance. 22% drug abuse employees do not use drug in workplace.

**Table: 6**

Timing of drug intake	Frequencies	Percentages
During break	90	60%
Before starting work	9	6%
Whenever get chance	18	12%
None of above	33	22%

**Figure: 6**



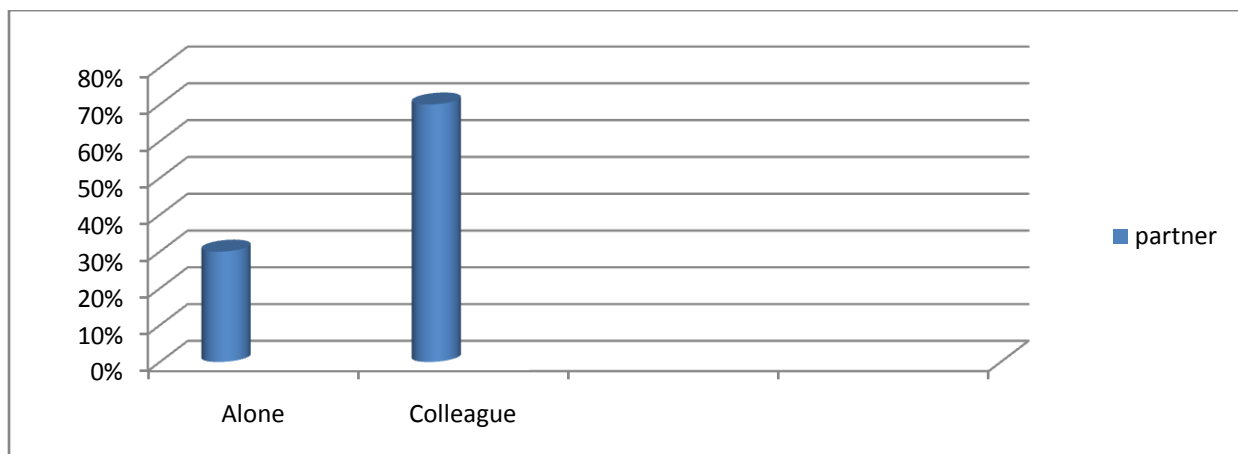
**b. Drug partner:**

Most of the drug addicts (70%) like to take drugs sitting with their colleagues and only 30% abuse drugs sitting alone.

**Table: 7**

Drug partner	Frequencies	Percentages
Alone	45	30%
Colleague	105	70%

**Figure: 7**



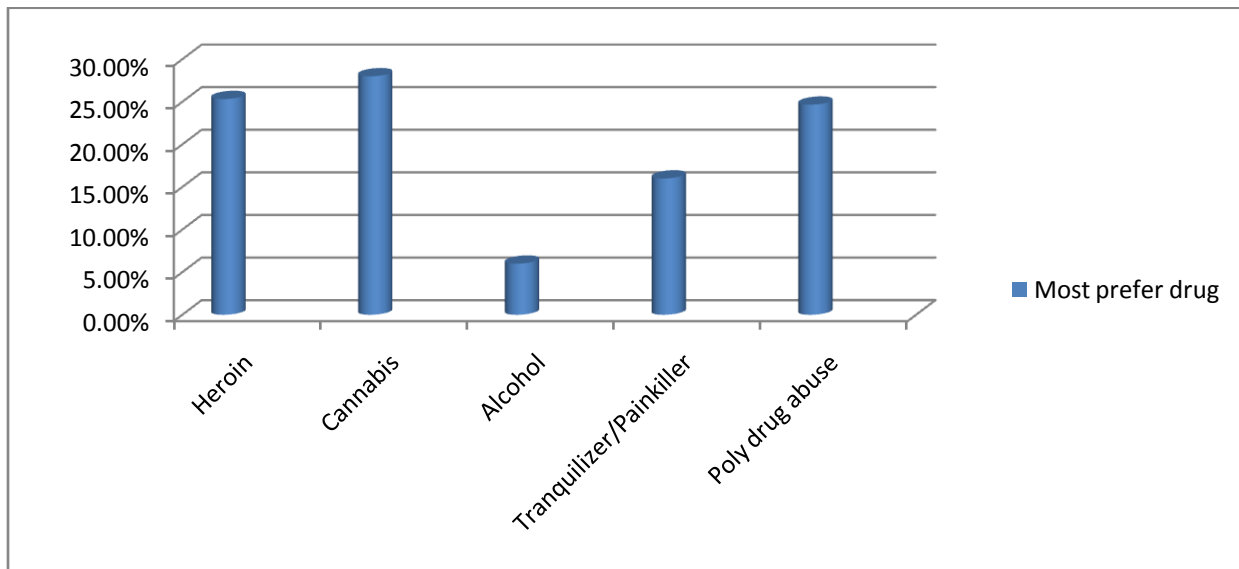
**c. Most prefer drug**

Results show that 28% drug addicts were using cannabis, 25.33% were on heroin, 16% were taking tranquilizers and painkillers and 6 % were alcoholics. Furthermore, 24.67% were poly drug abusers (taking more than one drug at a time).

**Table: 8**

Most prefer drug	Frequencies	Percentage
Heroin	38	25.33%
Cannabis	42	28%
Alcohol	9	6%
Tranquilizer/Painkiller	24	16%
Poly drug abuse	37	24.67%

**Figure: 8**



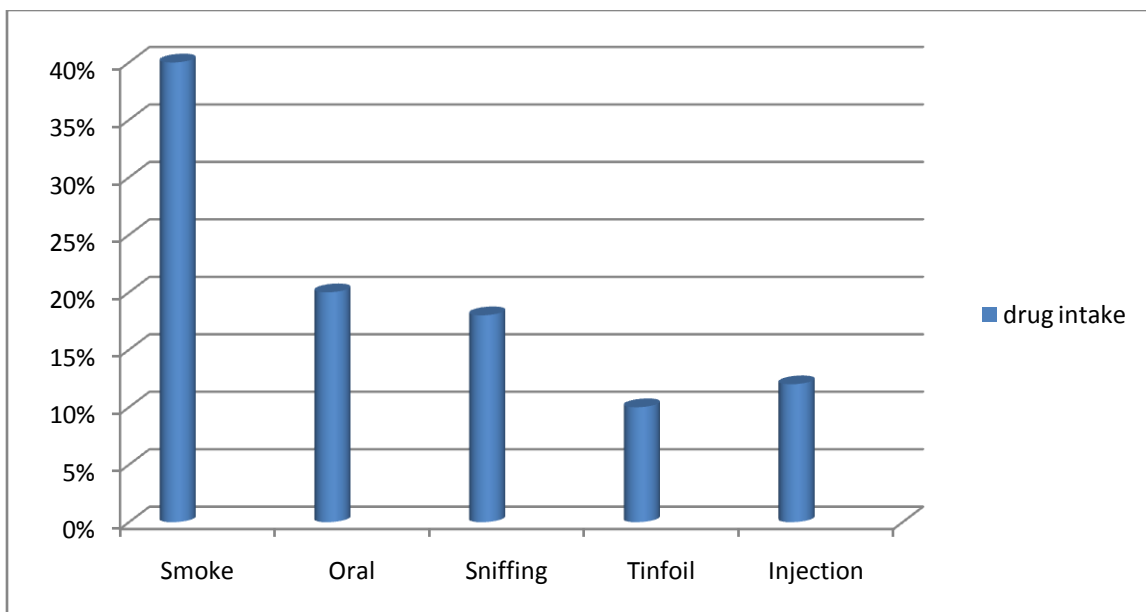
**d. Mode of drug intake**

It is also evident by the results that 40% drug addicts use drug by smoking, 20% use drugs orally, 18% sniff, 10% were using tinfoil method. Among them 12% were injection users.

**Table: 9**

Mode of drug intake	Frequencies	Percentages
Smoke	60	40%
Oral	30	20%
Sniffing	27	18%
Tinfoil	15	10%
Injection	18	12%

**Figure: 9**



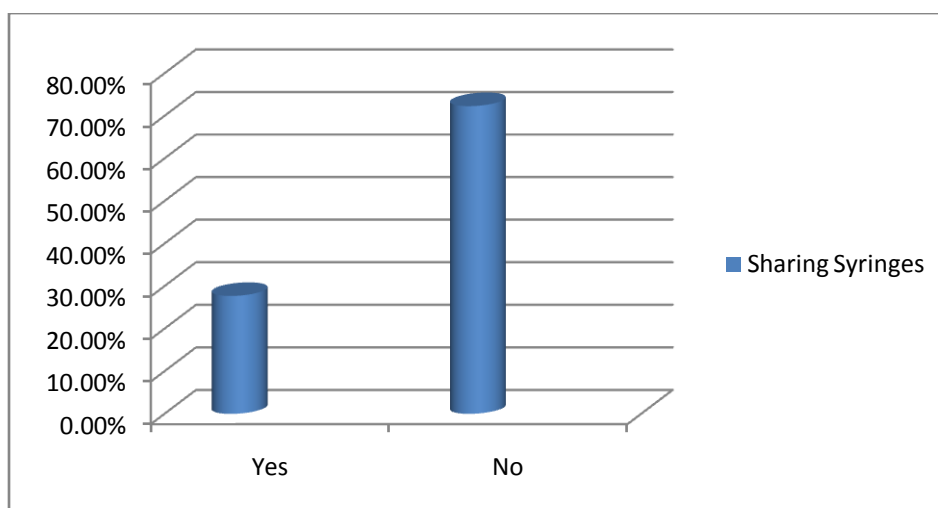
**e. Sharing syringes**

Among injection users 27.7% shared syringes with working drug partner and 72.3% did not share syringes at their workplaces while taking drugs

**Table: 10**

Sharing Syringes	Frequencies	Percentages
Yes	5	27.7%
No	13	72.2%

**Figure: 10**



### 3. Consequences of drug abuse Problems at workplace

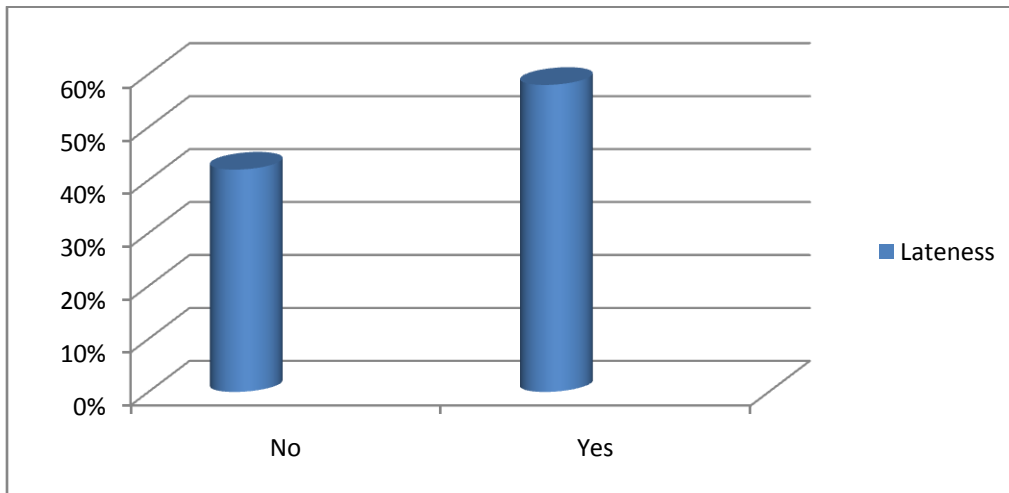
#### a. Lateness at workplace

Among 150 drug abuse employees, 58% reported to be late from work and 42% were able to come on time at their workplaces.

**Table: 10**

<b>Lateness at workplace</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
No	63	42%
Yes	87	58%

**Figure: 10**



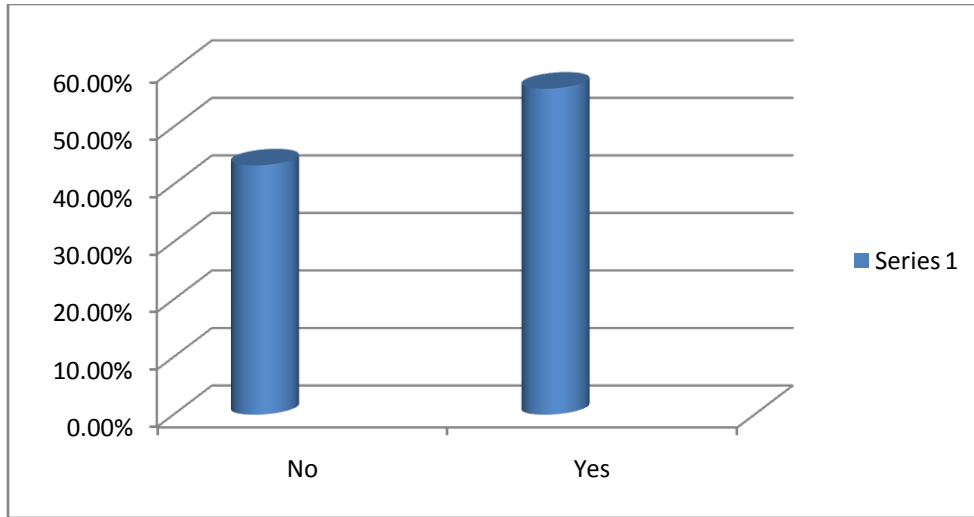
#### b. Irregularity at workplace:

Table is showing that most of the drug abuse employees (56.67% ) were not regular at their workplaces but 43.33% were reported to be regular worker.

**Table: 11**

<b>Irregularity at workplace</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
No	65	43.33%
Yes	85	56.67%

**Figure: 11**



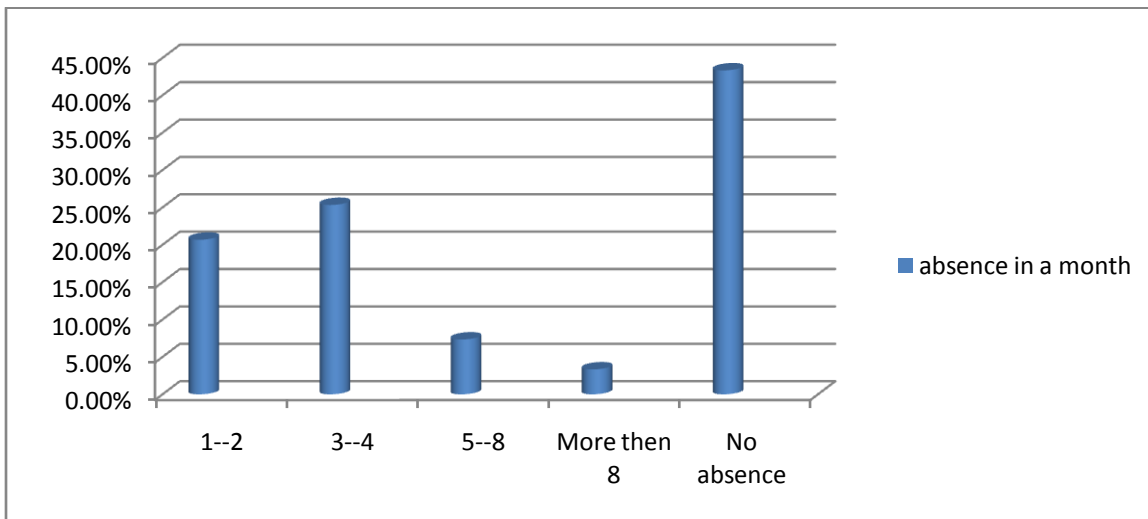
**c. No. of absence in a month:**

It is evident by the results that 25.33% drug abuse employees remained absent from their work 3 to 4 days a month, 20.67% were absent 1 to 2 days in a month, 7.33% were on leave for 6 to 8 days and 3% remained absent more than 8 days in a month. Among all abusers, 43.33% did not absent from their work.

**Table: 12**

No. of absence in a month	Frequencies	Percentages
1-2	31	20.67%
3-4	38	25.33%
6-8	11	7.33%
More than 8	5	3.33%
No absence	65	43.33%

**Figure: 12**





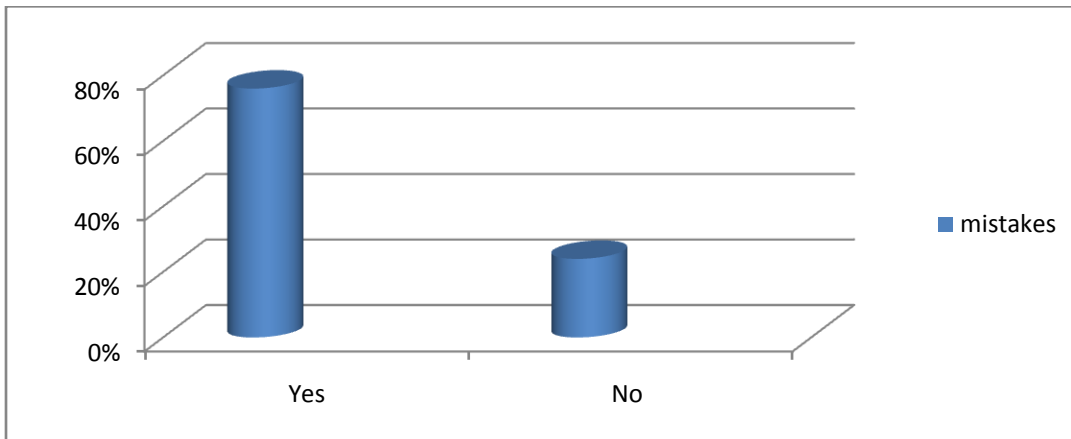
**d. Committing mistakes**

Results reveal that 76% drug abuse employees committed mistakes at their workplace and 24% did not make mistakes while performing their duties.

**Table: 13**

Committing mistakes	Frequencies	Percentages
Yes	114	76%
No	36	24%

**Figure: 13**



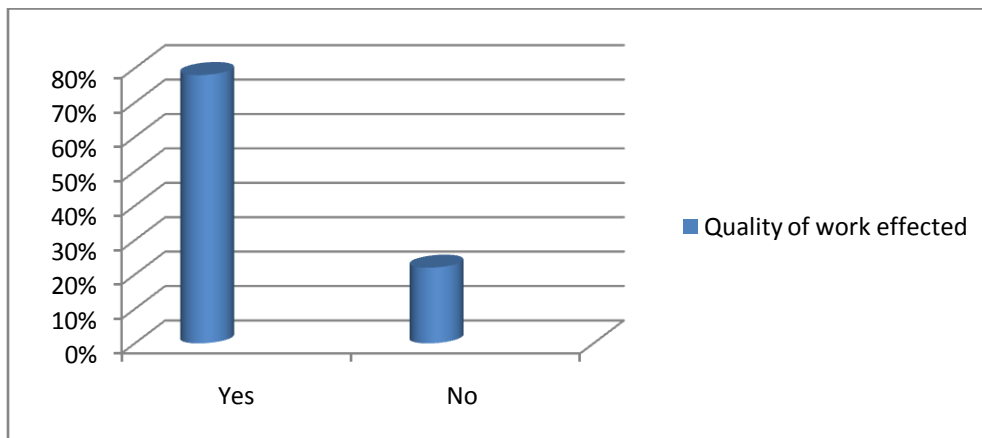
**e. Quality of work effected:**

Analysis reveal that 78% drug abuse workers reported effected quality of work owing by their drug abuse problems and 22% reported no change in their quality of work after taking drugs.

**Table: 13**

Quality of work effected	Frequencies	Percentages
Yes	117	78%
No	33	22%

**Figure: 13**



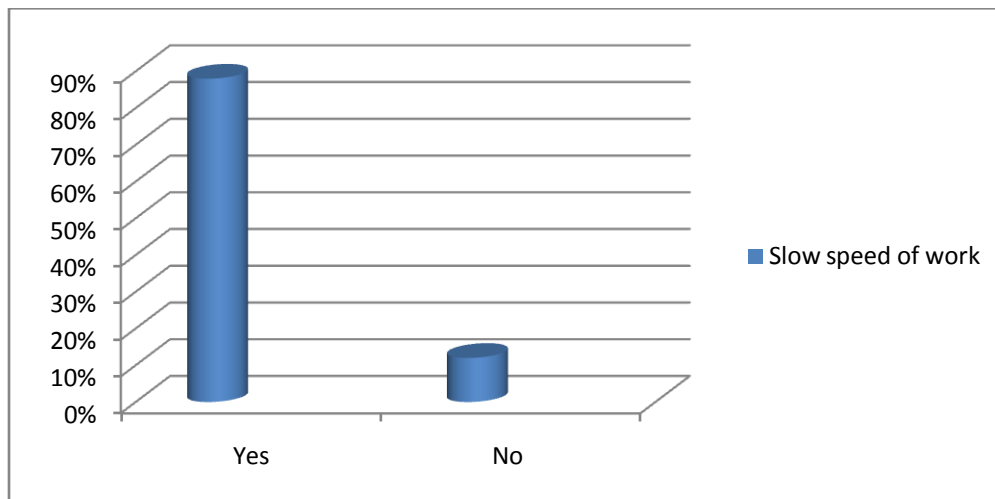
**f. Slow speed of work:**

Statistical analysis reveal that 88% drug abuse employees reported slow speed of their work and 12 % report same speed of work before and after indulging in drug habits.

**Table: 14**

<b>Slow speed of work</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
Yes	132	88%
No	18	12%

**Figure: 14**



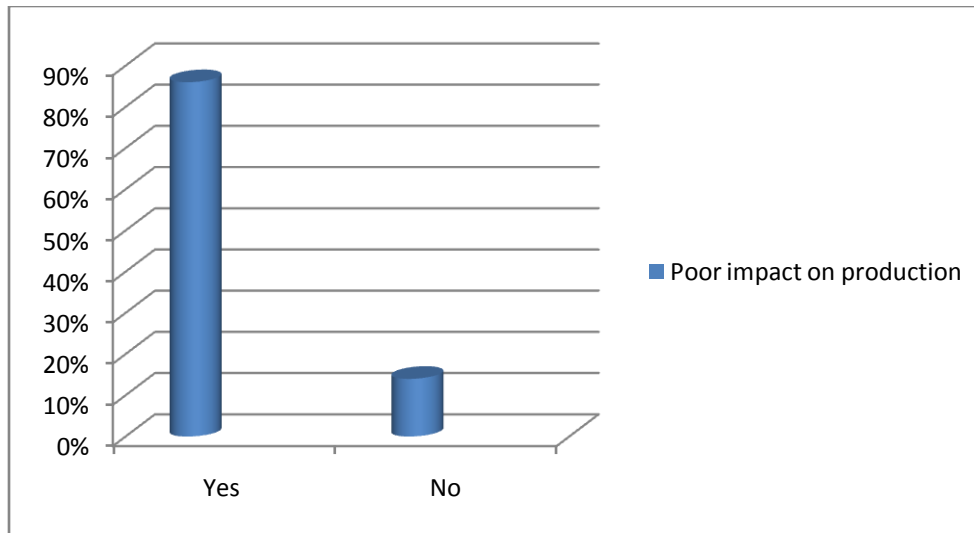
**g. Poor impact on production:**

It is shown by the results that 86% drug addicts employees reported to have poor impact on production due to drug abuse problems and 14% reported no impact on production of their organization.

**Table: 15**

<b>Poor impact on production</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
Yes	129	86%
No	21	14%

**Figure: 15**



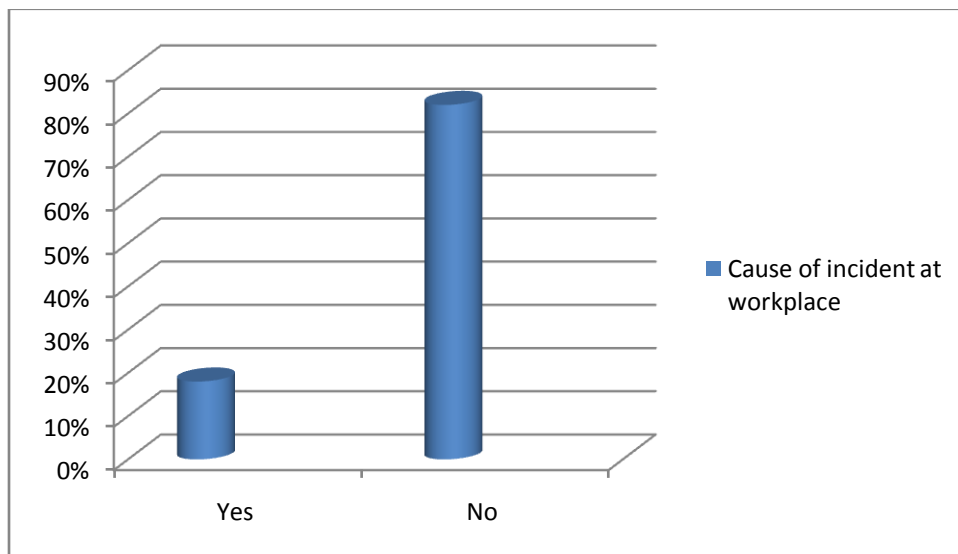
**h. Cause of incident at workplace:**

Among 150 drug abuse employees, 18% drug abusers became cause of incident at their workplace and 82% did not report any incident related to their addiction.

**Table: 16**

Cause of incident at workplace	Frequencies	Percentages
Yes	27	18%
No	123	82%

**Figure: 16**



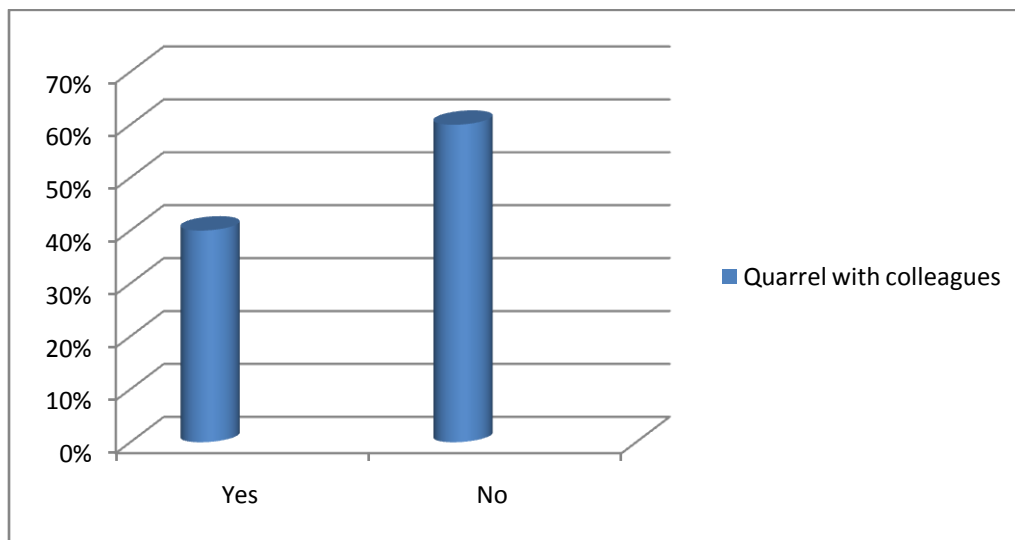
**i. Quarrel with colleagues:**

Approximately 40% drug abuse employees quarreled with their colleagues and 60% never quarreled at their workplace.

**Table: 17**

<b>Quarrel with colleagues</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
Yes	60	40%
No	90	60%

**Figure: 17**



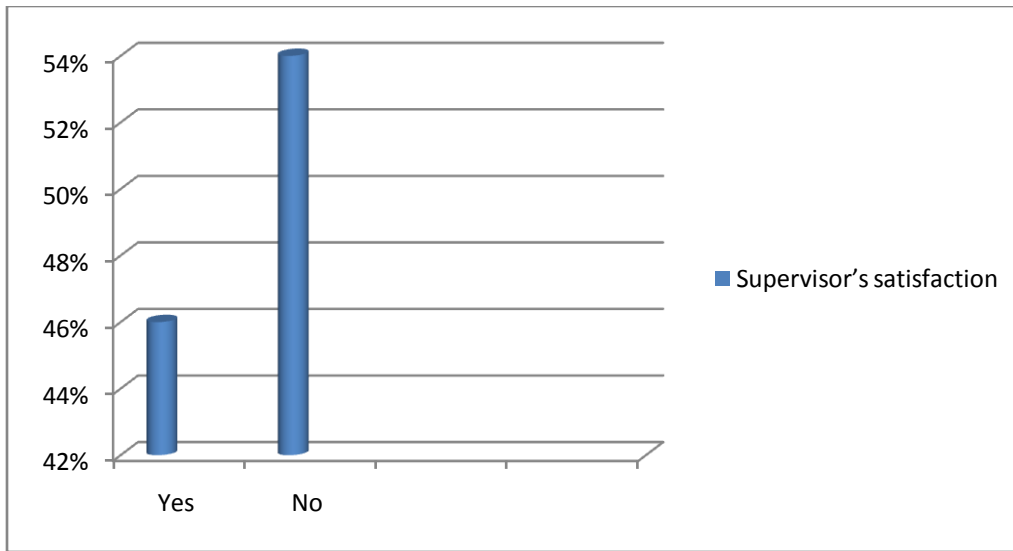
**j. Supervisor's satisfaction**

Approximately, 54% drug abuse employees were unable to satisfy their supervisor/employer due to drug addiction, whereas 46% reported to satisfy their supervisors.

**Table: 18**

<b>Supervisor's satisfaction</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
Yes	69	46%
No	81	54%

**Figure: 18**



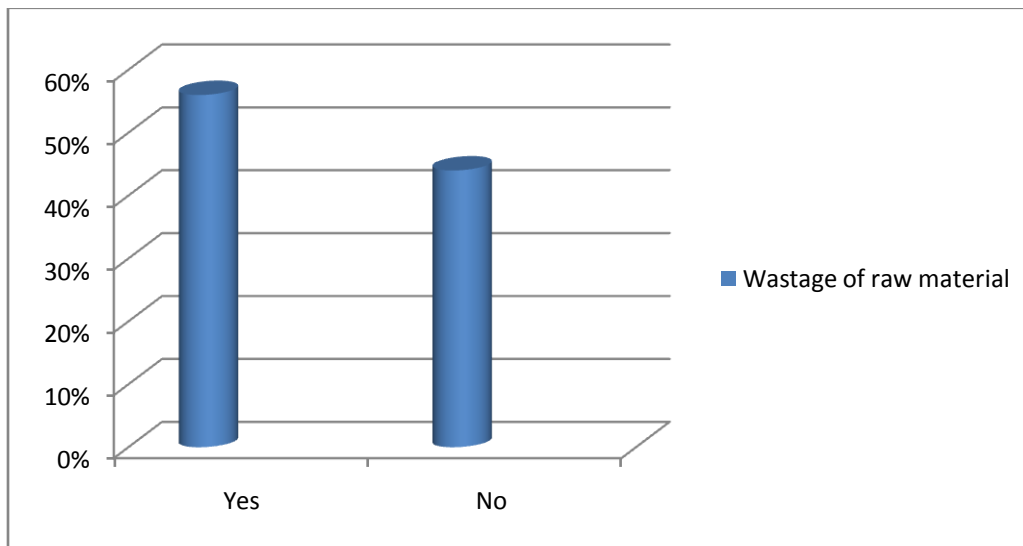
**k. Wastage of raw material**

It was reported by 56 % drug abuse employees that they have wasted raw material while working. On the other hand, 44% reported that they did not waste raw material at their workplace.

**Table: 19**

Wastage of raw material	Frequencies	Percentages
Yes	84	56%
No	66	44%

**Figure: 19**



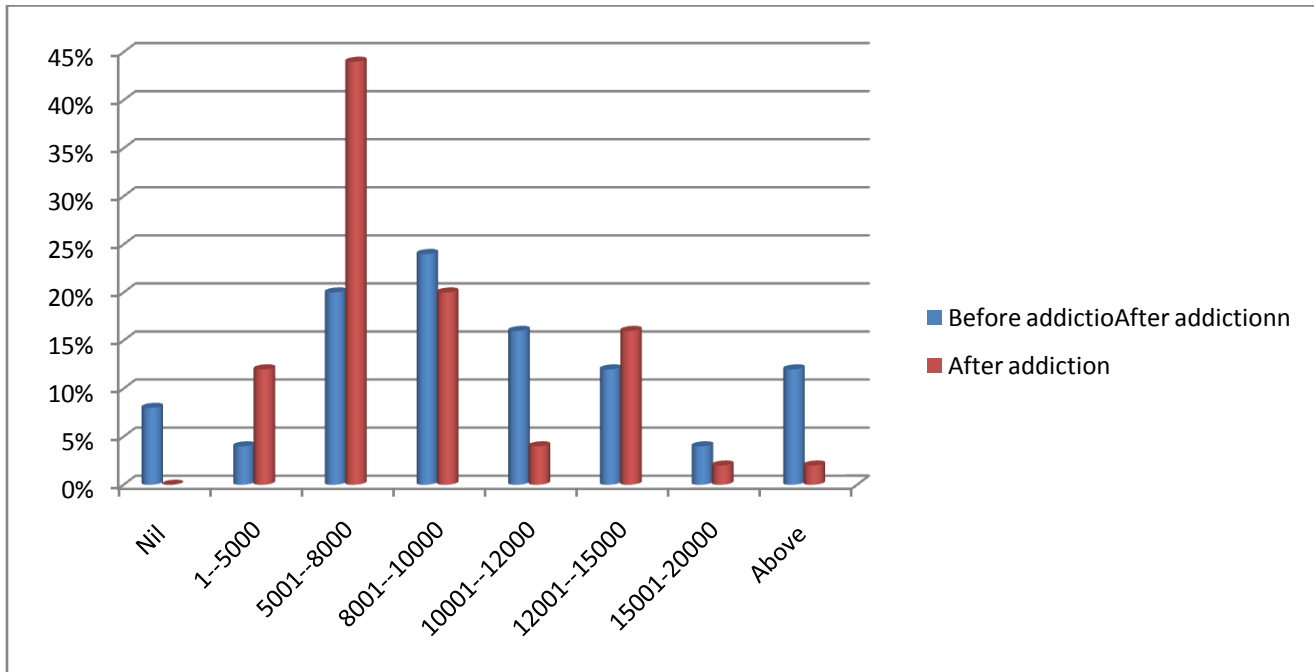
## I. Decline in Income

Results reveal a decline in the income of drug abusers after indulging in drug. Most of the drug abusers (24%) were earning money between 8 to 10 thousands per month but after indulging in addiction most of them (44%) were earning 5 to 8 thousands per month. Moreover, 16% were earning 10 to 12 thousands per month before addiction but after addiction only 4% were able to earn that amount. Among them 4% were earning 15 to 20 thousands before addiction but 2% of them, after indulging in drugs, were earning 15 to 20 thousands per month. Results are also showing that before addiction 12% addicts were earning more than 20 thousands per month but after having drug abuse problems 2% of them could earn that amount per month.

**Table: 20**

Decline in Income	Before addiction		After addiction	
	Frequencies	Percentages	Frequencies	Percentages
Nil	12	8%	0	0%
1-5000	6	4%	18	12%
5001-8000	30	20%	66	44%
8001-10000	36	24%	30	20%
10001-12000	24	16%	6	4%
12001-15000	18	12%	24	16%
15001-20000	6	4%	3	2%
Above	18	12%	3	2%

**Figure: 20**



## Discussion

Drug addiction appeared to be a social problem because of its adverse impact on individual, society and economy of any country as shown by the findings of present survey. Addiction to drugs impair a worker's skill to work effectively, deteriorate his ability to enhance the productivity of organization and further decreases his income status that also brings problems in his living environment.

Researches reveal that a drug addicts could not perform his role in the society and fails to prove him a dedicated employee that result in poor work. Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (1991) explored prevalence and impact of drug abuse in the Alberta workplace and a relationship between drug abuse and workplace accidents and problems such as low productivity, absenteeism, slow work and mistakes owing to impairment or hangover. Moreover, accidents and problems were associated with supervisory action (drunkenness or using drugs on the job), security problems (dismissal due to problem, theft, sabotage) and health and safety problems (accidents damaging equipment/property or injury, reassignment).

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (2008) reported a significant difference in performance of drug abuse employees and non-abusing employees. Drug abusing employees appeared to be more likely to change jobs, be late to or absent from work, less productive employees, involved in a workplace accident and file a workers' compensation claim. Results of present survey also reveal that employees having drug abuse problems remained absent from work, late and irregular at workplaces. Their quality of work also has been affected due to drug addiction.

Abuse of illicit drugs among employees is also associated with absenteeism and turnover (Normand, 1990) and job withdrawal (Lehman et al., 1992). Abuse of illicit drugs and heavy alcohol use also resulted in workplace accident and injury (Alleyne et al., 1991). The annual estimated effects of these problems on the industry productivity and health care was \$100 billion (Drug Strategies, 1996). The present survey also found out that approximately 86% drug abusing employees affected productivity of their organizations by committing mistakes, being absent from work and slow speed of work.

Mangione and his associates (1999) studied the relationship between employee drinking practices and a variety of work performance among 6,540 workers of 16 worksites. The results of that survey indicated self-reported work performance problems (e.g., missed work, done less work, done poor quality work, etc.). Moderate to heavy drinkers reported more work performance problems than employees who drank. It is also shown by the researches that employers have to suffer a lot in term of job injuries, lost of productivity, absenteeism and other factors due to drug abuse in the workplaces. A study conducted by U.S. Department of Labor (1990) showed that employees having substances abuse problems are 25 to 30 percent less productive and miss work three times more. Study also revealed that drug abuse results in higher safety risks, and accidents on job, approximately 65% were related to drug or alcohol use. It is also consistent with the findings of present study that is; drug abuse employees became cause of incident at their workplace, were responsible for less productivity and remained absent from their work.

The present survey also indicated that drug abuse problems of employees increase the chances of mistakes and wastage of time and material while working. It is also evident by the finding of above mentioned study of U.S

Department of Labor (1990) that tasks that require judgment, constant attention, immediate memory and fine motor skills could not be completed and disturbed by drug abuse problems. Drug appeared to be affecting a person physically and mentally as well. Memory, attention span, fine motor skills are impaired owing to frequent use of drugs. If problem occurs in memory and concentration of an employee then quality of work is obviously affected. And overall loss is vividly seen in form of turnover, absenteeism, serious mistakes, accidents, safety risks and poor productivity.



## **Conclusion**

Based on the present survey, it is concluded that drug addiction and workplace problems are associated with each other. Increasing trend of using drugs by employees at workplaces resulted in poor quality of work, absenteeism, and poor productivity, wastage of time and material and decline in their income status. Their patterns of drug abuse at workplaces are also affecting whole environment that is dangerous for healthy employees/workers (non- abusers).

# Recommendations

- Treatment facilities must be provided to drug abuse employees to overcome their addiction
- Prevention of drug abuse problems is needed to save workplaces from this disease
- A complete and comprehensive program of Drug Free Workplace must be implemented to fight substance abuse problems at workplaces
- There is need to implement drug testing program at workplaces
- A stringent action must be taken by government and organization to eradicate drug addiction from workplaces in order to enhance productivity and economy of Pakistan
- Further researches in this area must be conducted to highlight facts and figures of drug addiction, its increasing trend and consequences at workplaces as well.
- A collaboration of industries and companies with non-governmental organization working in the field of drug addiction must be encouraged to save our society from being trapped by addiction

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# DRUG FREE WORKPLACE TODAY EVERY DAY

*Be Alert, Be Aware, Be Alive*



**Is chief Preventable Cause of Low Productivity, Accidents, Wastage of Raw Material, Wastage of Time High Rate Employee Turnover and Poor Quality**