



LIVED EXPERIENCES OF FAMILY MEMBERS WITH RELAPSES OF METHAMPHETAMINE ADDICTION IN PSYCHIATRY UNITS IN TERTIARY CARE HOSPITALS IN PESHAWAR, KPK

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Abstract:

Introduction: Methamphetamine addiction affects both addicts and their families, presenting unique challenges with a high relapse rate. Family members may experience psychological effects and struggles in seeking treatment.

Objectives: To explore the Lived experiences of the family members of a patient with a relapse of methamphetamine addiction in Peshawar, KPK.

Methodology: This study employed a descriptive qualitative phenomenology approach to explore the experiences of 15 participants over 18 years old in tertiary care hospitals in Peshawar. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews using a topic guide after obtaining consent from the participants. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns and themes in the data. The study received ethical approval from Khyber Medical University.

Results: A total of 19 categories were extracted from the data, which were arranged in a way to extract five themes. These themes were Reverting factors, Hopelessness, Treatment challenges, Complex emotions, and Psychological Impact.

Conclusion: This study explored the experiences of family members with relapses of methamphetamine addiction in Peshawar, KPK. The findings underscore the complex emotions, feelings of hopelessness, psychological impact, treatment challenges, and reverting factors that these family members encounter.

Keywords: Lived Experiences, Family Members, Relapse, Methamphetamine, Drug Addiction

Introduction: Methamphetamine, often known by the street name ice, presents as a transparent, crystalline powder possessing a bitter flavor, primarily leading to the stimulation of the central

nervous system (1).Methamphetamine increases dopamine release in the brain, creating intense feelings of pleasure and euphoria, contributing to psychological addiction. It also has harmful physiological effects, including increased heart rate, elevated blood pressure, and rapid breathing, which can lead to serious health problems like heart attacks, strokes, and respiratory issues. Additionally, prolonged use of methamphetamine can result in psychiatric symptoms such as anxiety, paranoia, aggression, hallucinations, mood swings, and long-lasting impacts on mental well-being(2,3).

Excessive methamphetamine consumption is highly dangerous due to its potent impact on the central nervous system and smooth muscles, leading to various harmful consequences. Prolonged use or over dosage of methamphetamine can result in severe psychiatric consequences (4). Moreover, compared to other stimulants, methamphetamine is more addictive if used continuously, and its users are reported to be aggressive, short-tempered, and dangerous (5).

Globally, the exact prevalence of methamphetamine is still not clear due to poor reporting and sensitive drug use among professionals. However, available evidence indicates a concerning trend. The prevalence and mortality rates of methamphetamine use disorder have doubled over the past decade, suggesting its growing significance as a global drug problem (6). In 2019, approximately 27 million individuals worldwide, accounting for 0.5 percent of the adult population, were reported to have used methamphetamine. In 2020, the percentage of individuals who reported using methamphetamine in the past year varied across different age groups. Among people aged 12 to 17, the percentage was relatively low. For the age group of 18 to 25, the percentage was higher compared to the younger group. Among individuals aged 26 or older, the percentage of methamphetamine use was the highest among the age groups surveyed (7).In the year 2021, the United States documented around 32,537 fatalities attributed to methamphetamine overdoses (8). Significantly, methamphetamine was found in eight percent of individuals dependent on drugs in Pakistan (9).

Methamphetamine addiction presents a significant challenge due to the high risk of relapse. A cross-sectional study found that within 2 to 5 years, 25% of methamphetamine addicts experience relapse. (10). Another study found that relapse rates among drug addicts ranged from 40% to 60%, but for methamphetamine users, it was as high as 88%.(11). In another study, a staggering 97% relapse rate was observed among methamphetamine abusers, primarily due to peer pressure and a lack of family support(12).

Substance abuse doesn't only influence those struggling with addiction; it also significantly affects their families. family members numerous physical, mental, and emotional challenges, making their role highly burdensome (13).Moreover, family members living with individuals dealing with drug addiction also experience adverse consequences, such as financial instability, violence, and reduced quality of life, leading to further strains on the family system (14). Furthermore, methamphetamine addiction has wide-ranging effects on the entire family, with family members worrying about their loved one's well-being, safety, and future. This situation can lead to increased anxiety, stress, and sadness, particularly for parents who witness their child's struggle with addiction and its consequences (15,16).

caregivers of individuals who use methamphetamine face various psychosocial challenges (17). Moreover, psychological consequences were also experienced among the family members of drug addicts. Specifically, stress and strain were observed, and the most frequent disorders observed among them were depression, generalized anxiety disorder, minor interpersonal and children's behavioral problems, and hysteria.(18). Additionally, they experience significant stress, role changes, and disrupted routines (19). Furthermore, the negative effects of substance abuse extend throughout the family, leading to significant changes in their lives and resulting in feelings of embarrassment and a lack of support (20). As a result, family members of drug addicts often go through a range of emotions and experiences. The most common experiences they face are anxiety, fear, depression, guilt, shame, loneliness, confusion, and anger. These emotions arise from the concern for their loved one's well-being, the unpredictable and unstable nature of addiction, and the

strain it puts on family relationships. The impact of drug abuse on family members can be emotionally challenging, leading to a mix of difficult feelings as they try to navigate through this difficult situation (21). Moreover, caregivers often experience emotional burdens and insecurity and may require professional help for depression and anxiety. Additionally, financial burdens and the risk of relapse also contribute to caregiver stress (22)

The study revealed that family members and friends of individuals who use methamphetamine experience profound loss, including the loss of their loved one, trust, and personal well-being (23). Moreover, they also face societal stigma, judgment, and isolation, hindering their ability to seek support. This lack of understanding and resources from their social networks intensifies feelings of helplessness (24). Additionally, substance abuse disorder negatively impacts on the health and overall happiness of family members, resulting in burdens and disruptions in the family system, including intergenerational issues, isolation, and negative atmospheres within families (25). Furthermore, caregivers with substance use disorders face substantial challenges and burdens in their care giving role, which are exacerbated by the stigma experienced by society, leading to negative self-perceptions and beliefs (26).

Methodology: A descriptive qualitative phenomenological study design was carried out in the psychiatry units of public-sector tertiary care hospitals in Peshawar; Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The study was carried out in a very limited period of time of six months (December 2022-June 2023). Data was collected from a total of 15 participants, following data saturation. The purposive sampling technique was used to collect the data. The family members of patients who presented to the drug center with relapses of methamphetamine addiction and the participants over 18 years of age who willingly participated in the study were included in the study.

The study was approved from ethical review board of Khyber Medical University Peshawar. The administration of the tertiary care hospital also provided permission, and the participants' consent was obtained before the study was carried out.

Semi structured interviews were conducted individually. Interview topic guide was used for asking questions during interview. Local languages (Pashto) was used during the interview, the local languages were the author's first languages and were also convenient to the study participants. Thematic analysis approach was used to analyze the data.

Results: A total of 15 participants were included in the study. The majority (40%) of the participants were from the age group of 20 to 30 years, followed by 31 to 40 (33%) and more than 40 (26.6%). 86.6% of the participants were male and 26.6% of the participants were educated to secondary level. 33.3% of the participants were son or daughters of the drug abusers with relapse (Table 1).

Table 1: Socio-demographic profile of the Participants, n=15

| | F | % |
|---|----|-------------|
| Age of the participants | | |
| 20 to 30 Years | 6 | 40 |
| 31 to 40 Years | 5 | 33.33333333 |
| More than 40 Years | 4 | 26.66666667 |
| Gender of the Participants | | |
| Female | 2 | 13.33333333 |
| Male | 13 | 86.66666667 |
| Education Status of the participants | | |
| Illiterate | 4 | 26.66666667 |
| Primary | 2 | 13.33333333 |
| Secondary | 4 | 26.66666667 |
| Bachelor | 3 | 20 |
| Master or above | 2 | 13.33333333 |
| Relation with Patients | | |
| Son/Daughter | 5 | 33.33333333 |
| Father/Mother | 3 | 20 |
| Wife | 1 | 6.66666667 |
| Brother | 6 | 40 |

Thematic analysis: The basic aim of the study was to explore the Lived experiences of the family members having a patient with a relapse of using methamphetamine drug addiction. A total of 98 codes were extracted from the data. After axial codes, a total of 19 Categories were extracted and these codes were arranged in a way to extract five themes. These themes were Reverting factors, Treatment challenges, Hopelessness, Complex Emotions, and Psychological Impact (Figure 1).

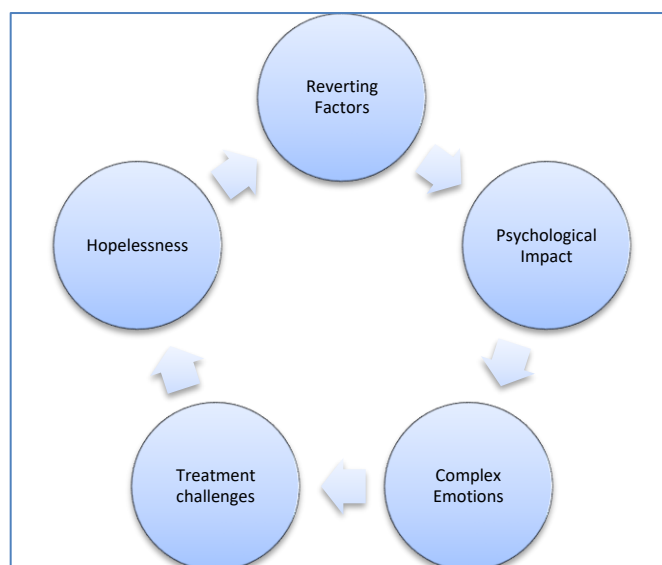


Figure 1: SmartArt depicting extracted themes of the study

Theme 1: Complex emotions: The first generated theme was “Complex Emotions”. The theme was extracted from four categories such as fear, frustration, embarrassment and stigmatization (Figure 2).

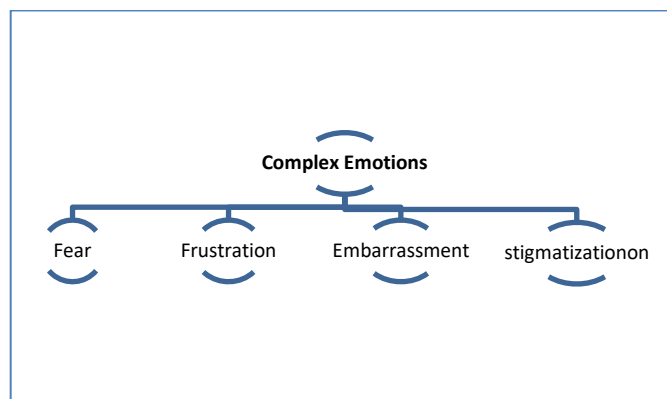


Figure 2: Smart Art depicting categories for the theme “Complex Emotions”

Theme 2: Hopelessness:

The second extracted theme was hopelessness. The theme was extracted from three categories such as Uncertainty, imposability and Desperateness (Figure 3).

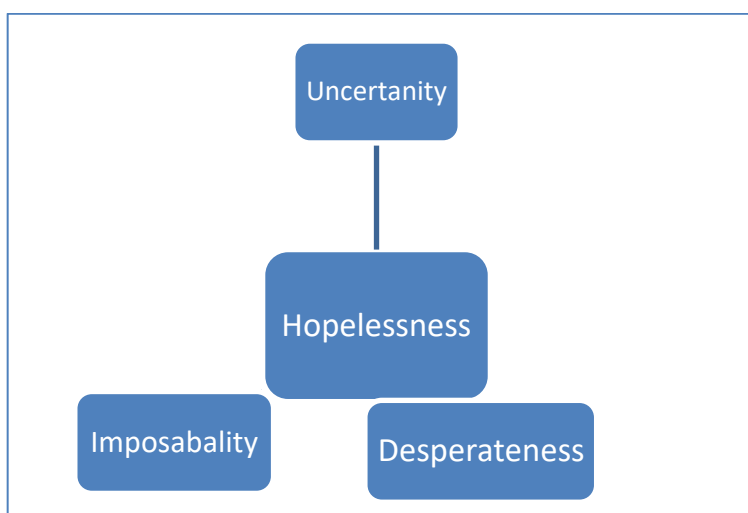


Figure 3: SmartArt depicting categories for the theme hopelessness.

Theme 3: Psychological Impact

The third generated theme was psychological impact. This theme was generated from categories such as worried, worthless feelings, stress, and sleep (Figure 4).

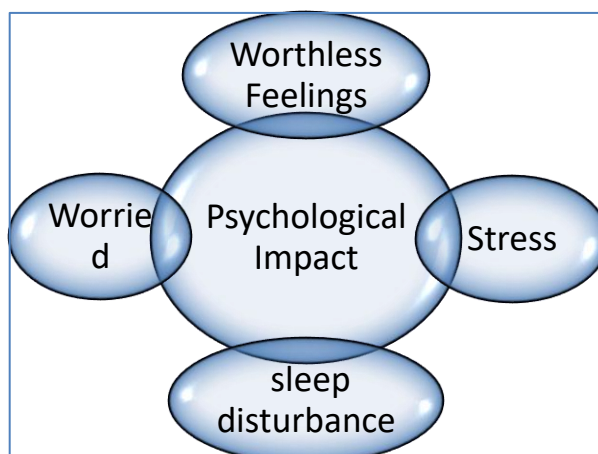


Figure 4: SmartArt depicting categories for the theme “Psychological Impact”

Theme 4: Treatment challenges

The fourth generated theme was treatment challenges. This theme was generated from different categories such as client disposition, Trained Health care Professionals, lack of political will and lack of satisfaction from treatment” (Figure 5).

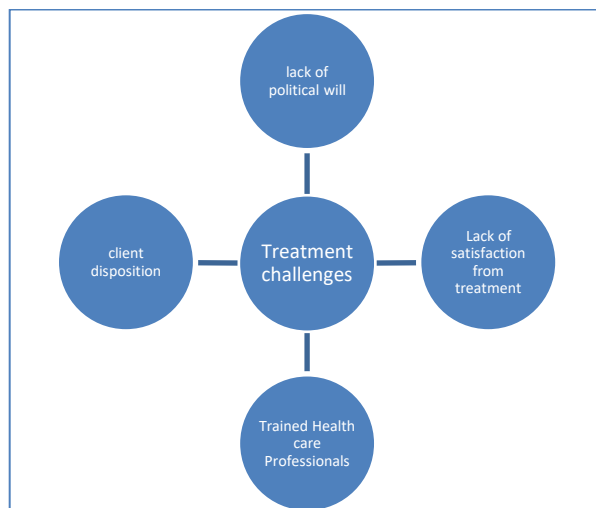


Figure 5: SmartArt depicting categories for the theme “Treatment”

Theme 5: Reverting factors

The last theme was reverting factors. This theme was extracted from different categories such as joblessness, peer pressure, lack of observation and isolation (Figure 6).

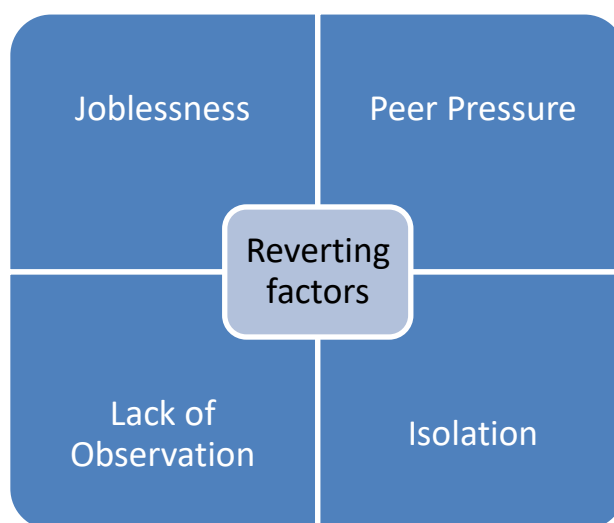


Figure 6: SmartArt depicting categories for theme “Reverting Factors”

Discussion:

The basic aim of the study was to explore the Lived experiences of the family members having a patient with relapse of using the methamphetamine drug addicted. A total of four themes such as Reverting factors, Treatment, Complex Emotions, hopelessness and Psychological Impact were extracted in this study. These findings were quite supported by another similar study carried out by Terence et al. the findings of the study reported that the overriding theme that was conceived of was struggling with the experience while also having the sensation of being overwhelmed by it. The following are some of the underlying themes: emotionally taxing and exhausting; Keeping a constant vigilance, which includes limiting one's participation in social activities, grappling with the

impact on one's finances, fighting an uphill battle against toxic family dynamics, avoiding and restraining violence, and struggling with feelings of anxiety and hopelessness for one's future (27). In this study, one of the themes was psychological impact on the relative. The relative reported worried, worthless feelings, stress, and lack of sleep. These findings were also supported by a study which stated that both the physical and mental health of the caregiver are impacted by the stress that comes with providing care for persons struggling with substance use disorders (SUD). To mitigate the negative effects on caregivers' health and to encourage better self-care, specialized care approaches directed toward caregivers need to be developed (28).

Although, drug abuse is a chronic and complex relapsing issue. In this condition the drug abusers need full attention and care. This care leads to social, financial familial and interpersonal complexities towards the family members. All these factors are lined with depressive feelings among the family members (29,30). Among the psychological impact, stress is one of the most common consequences experience by the family members of drug abusers (31,32).

In this study, the family members reported complex emotions such as fear, frustration, embarrassment and stigmatization. These findings were supported by literature which reported that drug addiction always leads to stigmatization and embarrassment for the family members of drug abusers because this act is not accepted by the community (33,34). It is believed that family members of people who use substances will suffer detrimental effects on their mental and physical health as a result of the high levels of stress they endure (30).

Similarly, families who are stigmatized tend to withdraw from society and suffer negative moods, both of which can cause them to miss out on opportunities to have access to valuable resources and to have fun. There is a good chance that family members and friends will experience a range of conflicting emotions, including fear, worry, denial, anxiety, hopelessness, anger, and even irritation. One's behavior toward one's relatives, particularly when it is displayed publicly, can also cause one to feel startled or ashamed (35,36).

In this study, certain treatment challenges were reported, such as client disposition, Trained Health care Professionals, lack of political will, and lack of satisfaction from treatment. A related investigation highlighted various difficulties in delivering clinical services, encompassing challenges related to the treatment settings' infrastructure and those associated with the broader service and treatment system. These challenges intertwine to create a highly intricate set of conditions for delivering these services (37). Similarly, another study supported the findings of the current study and stated that the lack of trained healthcare staff is a concerning challenge for drug abusers (38).

In the current study, some of the factors which lead to relapse were identified. These factors were joblessness, peer pressure, lack of observation and isolation. Supporting the findings of the current study, a study carried out by Zeng et al. The findings of the study imply that there should be an increase in the level of closeness between people who use drugs and their family members, and that the rehabilitation center should take various steps to enhance the level of psychological capital and the level of self-efficacy of people who use drugs, which will help to reduce the likelihood that they will relapse (39).

In contrast, another study highlighted some of the factors which lead to relapse. The findings of the study reported that a sense of no place in society, lack of self-control, and feeling of no support from the family members are some of the factors which lead to relapse (40). Similarly, expectation of the outcome, happy emotional state, expectation of a negative emotional state, and craving all demonstrated a positive and substantial link with the likelihood of relapsing. A substantial inverse association was found between low levels of self-efficacy and higher rates of relapse. There was no connection found between motivation, methods of coping, or social support and the probability of recurrence (41).

Supporting the findings of the current study, another study also reported that peer pressure is one of the factors which may lead to drugs relapse. Similarly, addiction and negative peer group pressure tend to go hand in hand with each other. When someone is subjected to this kind of pressure from

their peers, they are more likely to engage in risky activities like using drugs or alcohol. It's possible that peer pressure and relapsing into addiction are connected in some way, given that succumbing to this pressure after making the decision to get sober again could result in a relapse (42).

Conclusion: The findings show that these family members experience dread, frustration, shame, and stigmatization. The study stresses the need for focused interventions to give family members hope, support, and address their psychological well-being while caregiving. Recognizing treatment obstacles and pushing for qualified healthcare providers and government support can enhance treatment success. Comprehensive support systems, including as support groups, counseling, and family-specific educational programs, can provide emotional support, coping methods, and addiction and relapse knowledge. A holistic therapy approach that includes pharmacological and behavioral therapies and actively involves the family can improve patient outcomes. The study's small sample size and unique context limit its reach, but its findings have policy, therapeutic, and research implications. This study may improve assistance and care for families affected by methamphetamine addiction relapses in Peshawar, KPK, and lead to more effective interventions and support systems.

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