Chapter 4

Profiles of Addiction Treatment Seekers: Individual, Socio-Economic, and Environmental Factors of Those Participating in Addiction Treatment in Northern Cyprus

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Abstract

This study investigated the addiction profiles of 178 individuals in a Northern Cyprus addiction treatment program, analysing individual, socioeconomic, and environmental characteristics. 55.9% of the participants were young adults (born between 1991 and 2000) and majority of them were high school or university graduates. The majority were single (73.6%) and primarily used marijuana/cannabis (especially among those with moderate-good economic status). Synthetic cannabinoid use increased with lower economic status. Over half reported alcohol addiction, and most had legal employment. While family relations were generally good, 11.2% lacked a father, suggesting a potential role in dependence. Nearly a quarter had a family history of substance abuse. Social environments played a role, with 72.6% having friends who used substances and 47.7% reporting easy access to them. Notably, 66.3% were under probation. These findings suggest that socioeconomic factors and social environment influence addiction profiles, with young adults, those with lower economic status, and those surrounded by substance use exhibiting higher risk.

Keywords: Addicts profile, Northern Cyprus, socio-economic and environmental variables, individual treatment program

4.1.   Introduction

Substance addiction, a global issue, intricately intertwines with various sociodemographic factors (Taghva et al., 2018). Exploring these connections unveils the multifaceted nature of addiction and its impact across diverse societal strata, education level, beyond academic achievement, reflects socioeconomic status, resource access, and potential knowledge/attitudes towards substance use (Tekyaprak, 2022). Its interplay with addiction is mediated by factors like stress, economic stability, and illicit substance access, explored through frameworks like the Social Determinants of Health Model and the Risk and Protective Factors Model.

In terms of marital status, including social support, emotional stability, and social norms, can mitigate or worsen addiction (Jang et al., 2018). Social Control Theory posits that marital bonds deter substance use, while the Stress-Divorce Model links marital discord/dissolution to increased risk. Parental status adds another layer. Children can act as deterrents due to responsibilities and parental instinct (Mayes & Truman, 2002), but the stress of parenthood, especially in single parenthood, can elevate substance use risk as a maladaptive coping mechanism.

The European context reveals numerous studies on this relationship (Göbel et al., 2016). In terms of Göbel et al (2016), there is a negative correlation between education level and substance use, thus decrease in education level affects the increase in substance use. Parental status and substance addiction present a complex picture, with social policies, cultural norms, and socioeconomic factors mediating the relationship (Israelsson, 2011).

While these studies offer valuable insights, further research is needed in Northern Cyprus due to its unique sociocultural and political characteristics (Tremeşeli, 2022). This exploration will inform targeted interventions and policies tailored to the specific challenges and contexts faced by individuals in the region.

4.2.   Literature Review

As indicated by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) in 2023, the drug preferences of young people are constantly evolving. Various cultural, social, and economic factors play crucial role in the preferences of substance use. Historically, tobacco, alcohol, and cannabis have been the most commonly used substances, with cultural norms, media portrayal, and accessibility playing a significant role in shaping these preferences. However, the preferred drug can differ based on geographic location, cultural background, and the current time. Laws, education campaigns and public health programs, can also have a huge impact on drug preferences among young people.

Cannabis, which can be used both for recreational and potential medical purposes, has gained extensive attention among the younger population (Gruber & Pope, 2002). Its appeal goes beyond its psychoactive effects, extending to its cultural, social, and political significance. Numerous different factors, including peer group and peer pressure, curiosity, recreation, and a desire for escape, can be the reasons that motivate young individuals to experiment with cannabis, leading to complex discussions on legality, ethics, and health implications.

Recent study about drug addiction treatment in Northern Cyprus has revealed common patterns and preferences of drug usage. Canbolat et al. (2017) highlighted that alcohol, cannabis, morphine, cocaine and synthetic cannabinoids are the most frequently used drug substances among treatment seekers as these results are consistent with global trends and pinpoints the growing market for synthetic cannabinoids. Çakıcı et al. (2022) studied the progression and development of psychoactive substance dependence over a 15-year period, whereas Bonnet et al. (2022) studied the drawbacks of numerous substances and identified a universal agreement on the harm caused by traditional illegal drugs, synthetic cannabinoids and alcohol.

As demonstrated by numerous studies, socioeconomic factors found to have a significant effect on shaping preferences. For instance, in a research

conducted by Greydanus et al. (2014), the history and use of cannabis were examined, with a focus on its growing popularity and potential health risks and benefits. This research is mainly relevant for understanding the high-economic status of cannabis preferences found in Northern Cyprus. Furthermore, research conducted by Jones and colleagues (2020) analysed drug use among US high school students and this research's findings provided a comparative framework for understanding how financial factors affect choices in North Carolina. Moreover, another research conducted by Brecht (2014) examined the trends and patterns of drug use in Los Angeles and suggested crucial insights about changing trends of synthetic cannabinoid and cocaine usage, for further comparison.

Utilizing a combination of universal insights and research specifically focused on Northern Cyprus, the complex factors that influence young people's substance preferences could be understood. It is important to gain a comprehensive understanding about these complex factors thus it becomes more crucial to design customized policies and interventions to address this issue.

Substance misuse has devastating consequences on individual's personal health, but it also affects the areas such as family dynamics, employment status and social networks. Research that conducted about this emerging issue indicates that addict individuals often hold jobs, but their quality and consistency may negatively affect by their addiction (Bachman et al., 1984). Family support, having constant social networks, ability to work, are crucial factors that can impact addicts positively and government assistance plays a significant role especially for those addict individuals.

Meeting basic needs remains a common struggle. Addiction's direct and indirect costs, coupled with financial hardship, create a difficult cycle to break (Henkel, 2011). Access to support networks, from families to government programs, directly impacts individuals' ability to fulfil basic needs, highlighting the need for comprehensive approaches that address both addiction and its socioeconomic causes (Sanders, 2000).

Family dynamics are deeply affected by addiction. Shaari and Kasim (2023) emphasize the interconnectedness of family relationships, highlighting the need for holistic care that integrates addiction treatment with fostering closer family ties.

The relationship between family problems and teenage substance abuse is emphasized by Hamza et al. (2022), who stress the significance of family-oriented therapeutic approaches. Assessment of the stories of young people struggling with addiction, noting that young substance users usually come from single-parent families and their have a history of substance use in families (El-Sayed et al., 2019). The findings of El-Sayed et al. (2019) show that the social environment and family of young people influence their substance usage. Peer pressure, drug accessibility, and immediate surroundings are underscored as influential factors in young people's substance use by Kaur et al. (2020) and Khan Rassel et al. (2018). Substance use among probationers is found to be higher by Galvin et al. (2022), indicating the necessity for targeted interventions. The prevalence of substance use in prisons globally is emphasized by Mundt et al. (2018) and Donnir et al. (2023), calling for expanded addiction services and efficient assessment and intervention techniques. Montanari et al. (2023) on the other hand, it highlights the emergency for interventions that address substance usage and related risk factors in the prison setting.

Based on the above studies (scientific literature), evaluating the individual as well as the socio-economic and environmental profiles of addicts on addiction will be beneficial in terms of action plans and intervention plans to be developed on this issue. In this context, this study will reveal important findings in terms of better understanding the profiles of individuals participating in the adherence diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up program in the Northern Part of Cyprus, and in the development of action plans in this region.

4.3. Methodology

4.3.1. Research Aim and Questions

The aim of this study is to examine the factors affecting the success of participating in addiction treatment, and follow-up program. These factors include personal characteristics, economic status, substance preferences, financial and occupational security, family dynamics and environmental factors. The study also assesses psychological profiles and demographics to understand the impact of these factors on treatment outcomes. It also examines the effects of past criminal record on treatment modalities and effectiveness. This study aims to provide guidance to make treatment plans more individualized, inclusive, and successful. The findings of the study are evaluation of the substance addiction rehabilitation. The study can contribute to the development of more comprehensive approaches and treatment programs.

For this study, following research questions will be examined.

i. RQ 1: What are the personal characteristics of individuals participating in addiction treatment, and follow-up program, such as age, gender and psychological profile?

ii. RQ 2: What are the patterns in substance preference among participants in addiction treatment programs, and how do these preferences impact the treatment process?

iii. RQ 3: How does economic status influence the choice of substances among individuals in addiction treatment programs?

iv. RQ 4: What is the link between occupational standing, financial well-being, and the success of addiction rehabilitation?

v. RQ 5: How do family dynamics and relationships impact the recovery process in individuals with substance addiction?

vi. RQ 6: In what ways does the living environment of individuals with substance addiction affect their recovery journey?

vii.   RQ 7: How does a history of incarceration influence the approach and success of addiction treatment programs?

4.3.2. Research Design and Data Collection Tools

This study was conducted following the approval from an ethics committee, utilizing a descriptive quantitative research design, with the Addiction Profile Index (API) developed by Ögel et al. (2012). The 37 items of the self-report API questionnaire have 5 subscales. The Cronbach alpha ($\alpha=0.89$) reliability score of the data collection tool is quite high.

Data were collected ethically from participants who voluntarily took part in a substance abuse diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up program in Northern Cyprus.

4.3.3. Research Sample and Data Collection Procedure

This study investigated the addiction profiles of 178 individuals in a Northern Cyprus addiction treatment program.

4.3.4. Analysis of Data

Within the scope of the study, individuals participating in substance addiction diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up programs in the Northern part of Cyprus were reached. These individuals were informed about protecting their right to confidentiality, respecting, and protecting their individual rights within the scope of the study and were asked about their preferences for voluntary participation in the study. In this context, data were collected from 178 young adults (birth dates between 1991 and 2000) who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. The data obtained from 178 volunteers were entered into an Excel database in a way to protect their personal privacy and confidentiality. In the analysis of the data, SPSS 24 was used for cross table comparisons and Excel was used to create some tables and visualize the data.

4.3.5. Ethical Consideration

The study has been approved by the ethics committee of the Northern Cyprus Prime Minister's Anti-Drug Commission with regard to the Helsinki Declaration on human subjects testing. Informed written consent was obtained from all participants, and strict confidentiality measures were maintained throughout the study. The data collected were used solely for scientific purposes.

4.4. Findings

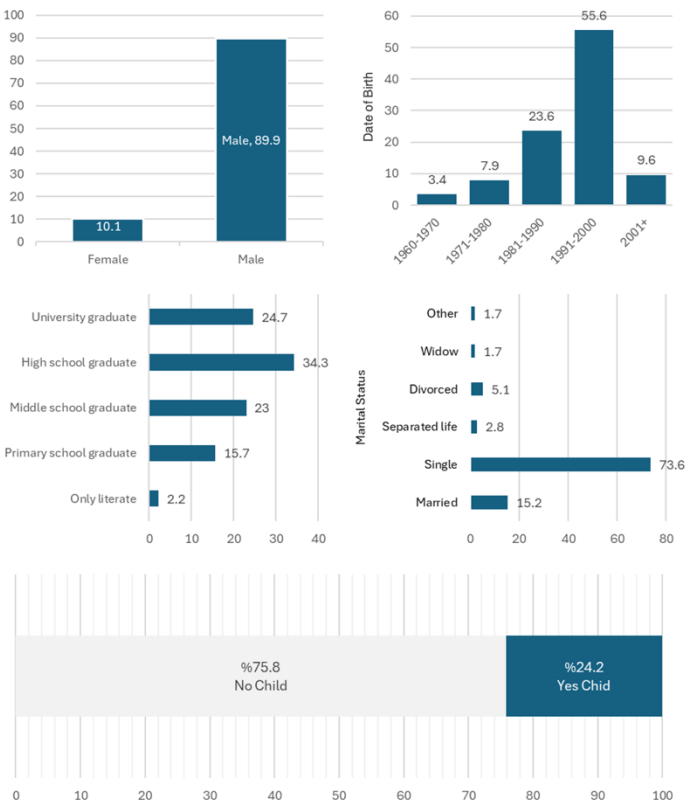This section presents the findings related to the research questions (see Figure 4.1.).

Figure 4.1. Infographic of the % distribution of the individual characteristics of the participants in the study

89.9% of the participants were male. When the distribution according to birth dates is analysed, the largest group is those born between 1991 and 2000. The highest number of participants were high school graduates. Although university graduates are minimally higher, they are very close in proportion to secondary school graduates. The majority of the participants, 73.7%, are single, while 15.2% are married. Only 24.2% have children (see figure 4.1.).

Table 4.1. Percentages distribution of substances preferred by participants in the addiction diagnosis, treatment and follow-up program

General preference	Average of General preference %
Marijuana/Cannabis	49.44
Synthetic cannabinoid	21.63
Alcohol	15.73
Ecstasy	4.78
Cocaine	3.93
Heroin	1.4
Volatile substances	0.84
Various pills	0.84
Amphetamine and	0.56
LSD, GHB, etc.	0.56
Pills like Rohypnol its derivatives	0.28

The most preferred substance is cannabis with 49.44%, followed by synthetic cannabinoids with 21.63% and alcohol with 15.73%. Substances with less than 5% preference are Ecstasy, Cocaine and Heroin. Substances with less than 1% preference are Volatile substances, Various pills, Amphetamine and LSD, GHB, etc., Pills like Rohypnol its derivatives (see table 4.1.).

Table 4.2. Distribution of preference items by general economic level

Type of Substance	Very good	Good	Moderate	Weak	Too Weak	Total of Each Substance
Synthetic cannabinoid	2	15	37	17	6	77
Marijuana/Cannabis	11	69	79	9	8	176
Ecstasy	3	8	3	3	0	17
Heroin	0	0	2	2	1	5
Cocaine	0	6	3	4	1	14
Pills like Rohypnol	0	0	0	1	0	1
Volatile substances	0	0	3	0	0	3
Various pills	1	1	0	0	1	3
Amphetamine and its derivatives	0	1	1	0	0	2
LSD, GHB, etc.	0	0	1	0	1	2
Alcohol	5	18	23	6	4	56
General Total	22	118	152	42	22	356
General %	6.2	33.1	42.7	11.8	6.2	100

When the distribution of substance users in terms of economic level is analysed, it is seen that the majority of them have a medium or above average economic level. Individuals with very good economic status are more likely to prefer cannabis/hashish, followed by alcohol. Individuals with a good or medium economic status generally prefer cannabis/hemp. However, those with medium economic status differ from those with medium and above economic status in their preference for synthetic cannabinoids. Individuals with good and medium economic status prefer alcohol. Alcohol consumption preference is most common in these two groups. Individuals with good economic status have a slightly higher preference for ecstasy compared to other groups. On the other hand, individuals with poor economic status prefer synthetic cannabinoids more than marijuana/marijuana. Those with some of moderate and poor economic status prefer cocaine (see table 4.2.).
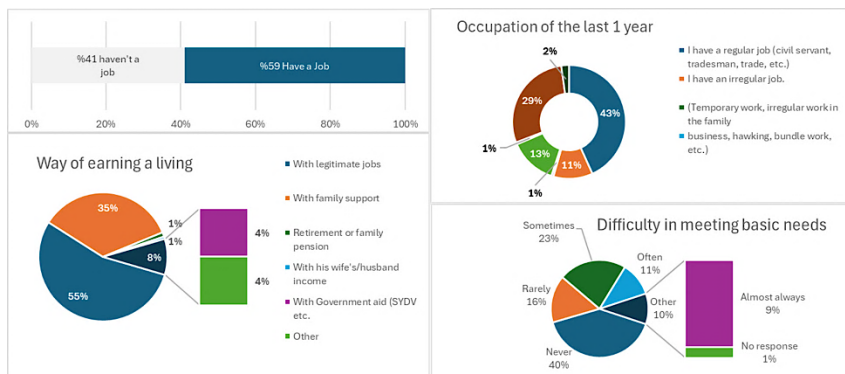
Figure 4.3. Infographic showing distribution of respondents' occupational status and challenges related to livelihoods and basic needs

59% of the respondents have a vocation. 54.5% derive their sustenance from their lawful vocations, whereas 34.8% rely on familial support. A mere 4.5% depend on governmental aid, while another 4.5% subsist through alternative means. Additionally, 1.1% derive their livelihood from their family's wages or retirement funds, whereas 0.6% rely on spousal assistance. Regarding their employment status in the last a year, 43.3% had an ordinary job, 11.2% worked intermittently and 0.6% were retired or fulfilling the role of housewife. Also 13.5% had continuing education, 28.7% were unemployed and 2.2% avoid answering. Upon scrutinizing the prevalence of individuals experiencing hardship in meeting their fundamental requirements, it becomes apparent that 40.4% never encounter any difficulties. Conversely, 15.7% rarely experience such challenges, while 22.5% face them occasionally. An additional 11.2% frequently encounter difficulties, and the same percentage encounter them often. Lastly, 9% find themselves almost always struggling to meet their essential needs, whereas 1.1% refrained from providing an answer. It is seen that 59.5% of dependent individuals have rarely or very difficulties in meeting their basic needs (see figure 4.3.).
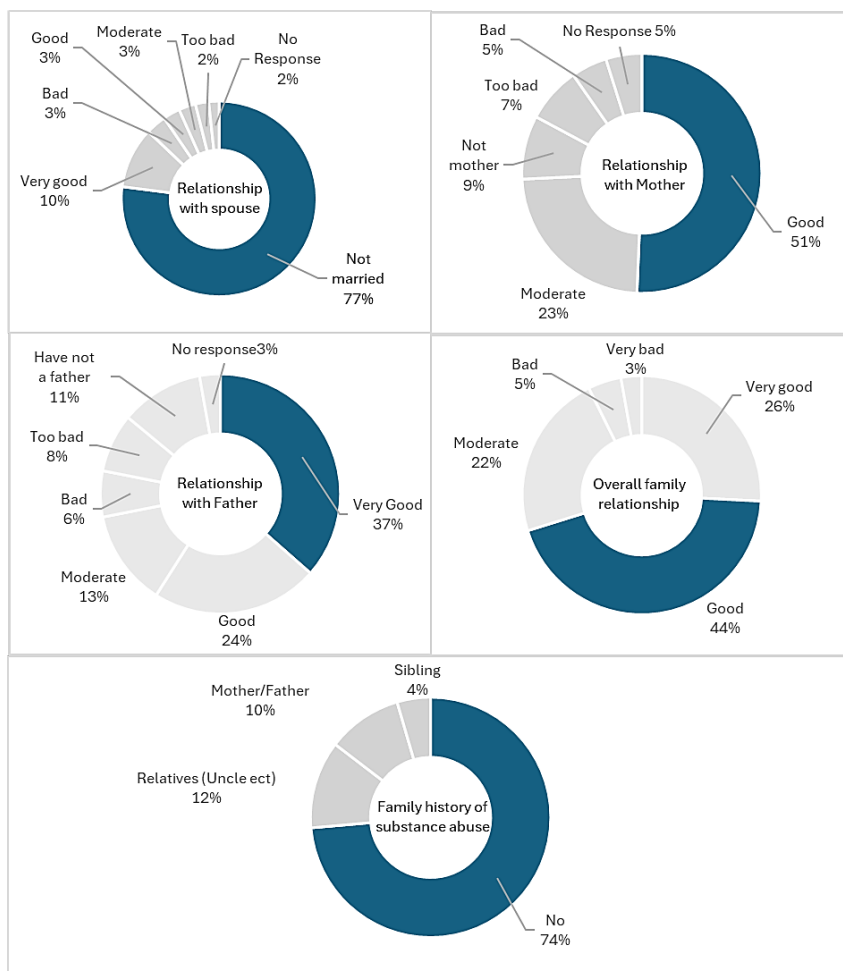
Figure 4.4. Infographic showing the percentage distribution of family relationships of substance abusers

When relationships of individuals with addiction issues and their spouses were evaluated, it was found that the majority (77%) were single and only a small percentage (10.1%) had a good relationship with spouses. The analysis also included the relationships with their mothers and fathers. A significant portion (54.5%) reported having very good relationship with their mothers, while there were fewer individuals (36.5%) who reported a very good relationship with their fathers. The absence of a father seemed to have a greater impact on dependency issues compared to the absence of a mother.

Overall, when evaluating general family relations, a significant number of individuals (44.4%) rated their family relations as good. In terms of family history about substance usage, the majority of participants (73.6%) reported no family history of substance usage (see figure 4.4.).
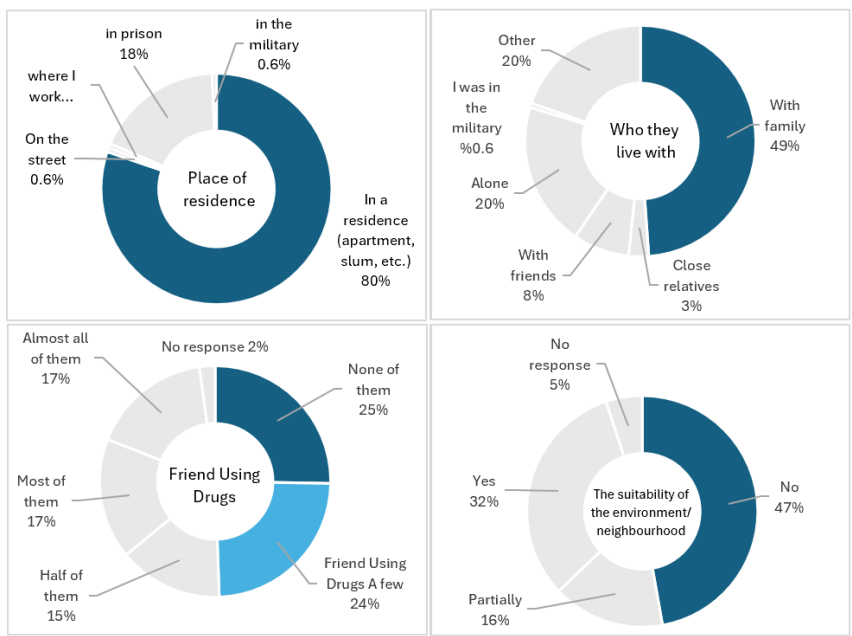

Figure 4.5. Infographic showing the percentage distribution of the life and environment of individuals with substance addiction

In terms of the survey, 80.3% of the respondents live in a dwelling, 18% of them live in prison. The rates of those who are homeless, living where they work and those in military service are significantly lower. In terms of survey results, 48.9% of the participants lived with their families, while 20.2% lived alone. 25.3% of the participants stated that they had no friends who use substances, while 24.2% stated that they had few friends. 72.6% of the participants stated that some of their friends used substances. In terms of finding substances in the environment, 47.2% stated that it was not suitable, 15.7% stated that it was partially suitable, 32% stated that it was suitable. 5.1% did not answer (see figure 4.5.).

Figure 4.6. Tree map of the distribution of participants according to their prison history

When the prison history of the participants is analyzed, 66.3% of them are benefiting from parole. 46.1% of them have never been convicted before and therefore have not been imprisoned. 38.2% have been convicted due to substance use. 7.3% have been imprisoned for reasons other than substance use. 8.4% have been imprisoned for both substance and other reasons. 46.6% have been imprisoned for substance-related reasons (see figure 4.6.).

4.5. Discussion

This study explores the profiles of individuals enrolled in the Northern Cyprus Individual Addiction Treatment Program (2022), offering valuable data on demographics, substance preferences, and socio-economic backgrounds. These findings contribute to the global understanding of addiction while holding specific significance for Northern Cyprus.

The program's male dominance (89.9%) mirrors global trends (UNODC, 2021), possibly stemming from biological, socio-economic, and cultural factors. The prevalence of younger participants (born late 1990s)

aligns with research highlighting higher drug use among younger individuals (Nawi et al., 2021), emphasizing the need for targeted prevention strategies.

Notably, synthetic cannabinoids and cannabis/hemp were the preferred substances. The rise in global cannabis use (Hasin, 2018), potentially influenced by legal shifts and changing public perceptions, might also be reflected in Northern Cyprus, possibly due to accessibility, social acceptance, or relevant laws. Substance Abuse Profiles in Northern Cyprus: Implications and Connections

Notably, synthetic cannabinoids and cannabis/hemp were the preferred substances. The rise in global cannabis use (Hasin, 2018), potentially influenced by legal shifts and changing public perceptions, might also be reflected in Northern Cyprus, possibly due to accessibility, social acceptance, or relevant laws.

Participants came from diverse economic backgrounds, highlighting the complex relationship between substance use and socioeconomic level. While some studies associate higher rates of substance abuse with lower socioeconomic groups (Boardman et al., 2001), others suggest its prevalence across all groups (Charitonidi et al., 2016), implying the influence of multiple factors, including stress, social networks, and accessibility.

Arslan and Sarı (2019) examine deeper the family dynamics-socioeconomic conditions-adolescent substance use connection, aligning with Northern Cyprus data where economic background significantly influences substance preference. Their findings, like Nagrale et al. (2018) from India, resonate partly with Northern Cyprus data, where abusers come from diverse educational and economic backgrounds, including middle-class and upper-class individuals.

Goswami and Goswamee (2017) found alcohol and heroin as the most misused substances in metropolitan areas, with a higher prevalence among young, unemployed individuals living with families. Similarities exist with Northern Cyprus, where a significant portion of abusers are under thirty, with cannabis and synthetic cannabinoids being most prevalent. This study

contextualizes the Northern Cyprus scenario by highlighting patterns in drug preference and demographics.

The predominance of single status and individuals without fathers suggests that family relationship dynamics might contribute to substance use. Parental absence in early childhood can be influential and linked to negative behavioural and mental health outcomes, including increased risk of substance abuse (Lacey et al., 2018). Aligning with Social Learning Theory (Akers & Jennings, 2015), the presence of friends who use substances emphasizes the social environment's influence.

Rahgozar et al. (2012) highlight the detrimental effects of a father's addiction on family relationships, finances, and child socialization, resonating with the Northern Cyprus findings where poor paternal relationships were observed among substance abusers. This study underscores the broader impact of addiction on families, aligning with the Northern Cyprus context.

The substantial number of participants on probation or with drug-related convictions raises crucial questions about the legal system and addiction. Research suggests that punitive approaches often fail to address addiction's root causes and may exacerbate individuals' social and economic issues (Stevens, 2010).

This exploration of addiction profiles in Northern Cyprus offers valuable insights into the local context and highlights the need for further research and targeted interventions. It also shows how important it is to understand the complex relationships that exist among illicit drug use and an array of social, legal, and financial problems in order to develop complete and effective global solutions.

4.6. Conclusion

The "Profiles of Addicts in Northern Cyprus 2022 Bibasoft" study sheds light on the characteristics of individuals seeking addiction treatment in Northern Cyprus, contributing to a nuanced understanding of associated demographic, socio-economic, and legal factors. The findings obtained can

contribute to the development of more effective and targeted strategies for addiction treatment and prevention in Northern Cyprus context.

This study shows implications for policy and practice in combating substance use from different perspectives. The observed male predominance necessitates gender-specific approaches in treatment, while the diverse economic backgrounds of participants highlight the need for interventions tailored to different socio-economic groups.

The study presents the link between substance use and different dynamics: social environment, economic conditions and family structure. The Northern Cyprus data aligns with observed trends in other regions, underscoring the global nature of these challenges. The study's emphasis on the prevalence of abuse among younger, economically diverse populations, and the impact of, especially, parental relationships within family dynamics, pinpoints crucial areas for further research and intervention efforts.

4.7. Challenges and Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study's generalizability stem from the fact that it was conducted on a sample of individuals in a Northern Cyprus addiction treatment program. This may restrict the ability to apply the findings to other populations, as the characteristics of the participants may differ from those who are not in treatment. Furthermore, the representativeness of the study's results for people in Northern Cyprus who need help with substance dependence may be limited. This is because the individuals seeking treatment may have different characteristics than those who are not seeking treatment, thus limiting the generalizability of the study's findings. Additionally, since the data was collected through self-reports from participants, there is a possibility of bias and inaccuracies in the information gathered. This could be due to individuals overstating or understating their substance use or the situations they are in, leading to distorted data.

In contrast, the cultural backdrop and economic conditions unique to Northern Cyprus may impact both substance consumption and treatment

outcomes, which could differ significantly from other regions. This context may also affect the interpretation of the study results. Furthermore, this research may confront challenges related to the changing trends in substance use. Substance use patterns often change rapidly in response to shifts in drug availability, legality, and societal norms. The study offers a moment-in-time snapshot of the data, making it difficult to establish cause-and-effect relationships. Long-term studies would provide better insights into how various factors influence addiction and treatment over time. Reliance on quantitative data may overlook the personal and psychological aspects of addiction experiences. Longitudinal research would offer a more comprehensive understanding of how different factors affect addiction and the treatment's impact over time. While findings from Northern Cyprus may not be generalizable to other regions with distinct cultural or economic contexts, comparative studies could help identify broader patterns and inform more targeted interventions.

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