



Influencing Factors of 'Yaba' Addiction among the Youth of Bangladesh and Its Effect: A Qualitative Study

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Yaba has become the leading drug in the southeast part of Bangladesh during the last several years; particularly among youth. In-depth interviews were conducted with the yaba addicted youth of Cox's Bazar district. The study examined interventions of peer groups and internal factors of addiction to yaba and also analyzed threats of yaba addiction. 60% of respondents revealed that due to the influence of peer group they started using yaba. There have been other reasons for taking yaba, which were curiosity, extra power & entertainment, besides parent's negligence. Yaba dealers also target youth and students as the best clients for their products. Yaba addiction ruins family norms and social values, parent-children relationship and it has a greater impact on the academic aspect of a student. Yaba addiction influences youth to involve themselves in micro crimes to major crimes such as theft, stealing, murder etc. It has become a challenge to stop yaba trafficking for Bangladesh.

Keywords: *Yaba (Methamphetamine); youth; peer pressure; curiosity; parent's unconsciousness; threat; crime; Bangladesh.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Every international organizations (i.e. UN and WHO) are worried about the increasing rate of drug addiction in the world. There are millions of drug addicted people in Bangladesh and most of them are young between the age of 18 and 30 [1]. Drug addiction is not a recent problem in Bangladesh but the rate of drug addiction is increasing sharply in Bangladesh in recent years [2]. Yaba consumption has also increased significantly in Bangladesh. Yaba is becoming widely popular and affordable for people of all social classes in Bangladesh. Yaba is known as horse tablet in Tai [3]. Yaba is also called "crazy medicine" which is a tablet form of Methamphetamine powerful stimulant. These synthetically produced pills contain 25 to 35 mg of methamphetamine and 45 to 65 mg of caffeine [4]. Southeast and East Asia have emerged as a global hub for methamphetamine; around 63 percent of global methamphetamine seizures are now occurring in this region [5]. Golden Triangle (Myanmar, Laos and Thailand) produces more than 60 percent of Yaba or methamphetamine of the world [6]. Golden triangle is known as the haven of yaba or MA. In term of geographical facilities, Bangladesh has become a large market for yaba trafficking. Yaba traffickers also use Bangladesh as a major transit point to supply yaba in the markets of Northern America, Africa, and Europe [7]. The selected area of study is Cox's Bazar which is the main transit point of yaba in Bangladesh. Yaba dealers use many routes of Cox's Bazar district like as Teknaf, Maheskhali, Cox's Bazar Shadar, St. Martin's Island, Pekua for bringing yaba from Myanmar. Bangladesh has experienced rising yaba addiction since in the early 2000s. After 2006, yaba consumption has increased geometrically in Bangladesh. How much yaba is consumed in Bangladesh? To imagine the scenario; firstly, we have to analyze how much yaba is seized by drug control authorities in every year.

In 2009, 1 lakhs 30 thousand pills yaba was seized by authorities [8]. In 2013, the authorities seized 28 lakhs 21 thousand which increased more than twenty-seven times within five years. In 2016, 2 crore 94 lakhs 50 thousand was seized by all agencies of Bangladesh and the rate is increasing rapidly [9]. Yaba addicted people are also increasing proportionately in the country. In 2016, the number of drug-addicted people was 46 lakhs in Bangladesh [8]. Around 91% of yaba addicted people are adolescents and youth [8]. There had nearly 2 lakh people

who were addicted to yaba in the whole country. Among them, approximately 90 thousand were students and their range of age was between 17 to 25 [8]. Not only men, but women are also addicted to yaba and their amount is increasing day by day. In 2016, ten thousand female students were addicted to yaba [8].

The main purpose of the paper is exploring the influencing factors of yaba addiction among young and adolescents of Cox's Bazar area in Bangladesh. The paper also focuses on identifying the reasons why it will be a threat to the youth of Bangladesh in the future. The paper has also studied the effects of yaba addiction on youths, families (norms & values) and societies (culture and norms) of the city. The main objectives of the paper are:

- a) To ascertain influencing factors on youth to initiating yaba.
- b) To identify the effects of yaba on youth and finding out the reasons why yaba is a threat for youth.

2. BACKGROUND OF STUDY

The study area is Cox's Bazar which located along with the Bay of Bengal in the south-east part of Bangladesh. Cox's Bazar has an area of 2491.86 square km and it has around 22, 89,990 populations (population census, 2011). Naf River is an international river marking the border of southeastern Bangladesh (Cox's Bazar) and western Myanmar. Naf River is the most used transit point of trafficking yaba from Myanmar. Jamirmura Point to Shahapuri Island (14 kilometers) of Naf river of Teknaf Upzilla is the common crossing point of trafficking Yaba on the border of Bangladesh-Myanmar.

The lion's share of yaba is trafficked in the country by using boat through the Naf River and its adjacent basin and deep sea. Kutubdia Channel, Maheskhali, Ujantia, St. Martins & Rajakhali (Pekua Upzilla) are the common road of trafficking yaba in Bangladesh from Myanmar. Cox's Bazar has become a big market and popular place of entertainment, especially for yaba addicted people. Now, Cox's Bazar has become the haven of yaba. It has become very easy to get yaba in any place of Cox's Bazar sea beach. Yaba has different surname or nickname and identity in the study area. Yaba is known as 'Guti', 'Tablet', 'Champa' and 'Baba'. However, 'Guti' and 'Tablet' is a popular name of yaba in this area. In the study area, Yaba business has



Diagram 1.

become the main profession for unemployed youth and dishonest businessmen. Besides, street children's, green coconut's sellers, rickshaw drivers, and auto-rickshaw drivers are also engaged in yaba business. Yaba has different types, colors, and flavors and the prices of yaba also depend on its flavor. Price menu of different types of yaba in the study area is: R7 price is 400TK- 700TK (per pill), Pink Champa is 300Tk-400TK (per pill) and 'controller' is 1500TK-2000TK (per pill). However, Pink Champa and R7 are popular to yaba addicted people.

There is little interesting difference in yaba business with other types of businesses. Real yaba dealers do not sell yaba directly to the consumer. This process follows different steps and price of yaba also increase steps by steps. This process is drawn in the diagram:

Real dealers import Yaba in 50tk-100TK price (per pill) and sell it to wholesale dealers. Wholesale dealer sells it to retailers at 150tk and retailers sell Yaba to brokers (CNG drivers, bus drivers, hotel staffs & rickshaw pullers). Finally, brokers sell yaba to yaba addicted or consumer or they supply yaba around the country.

3. METHODOLOGY

The methodology is an indispensable and integrated part of any research. Both primary and secondary methods have been used by following the objectives of the paper. The selected area of the study is Cox's Bazar district of Bangladesh. This research has in-depth interviews with yaba

addicted youth (n = 20) for collecting their stories. The researcher also collected information by an informal interview with specialists (n = 3) of the narcotic department to know their view about the causes and effects of yaba on youth. Each interview was based on the open discussion between researchers and participants and the researcher talked face to face with participants. There was no formal questionnaire model but questions pattern depended on the situations and each interview took place an hour on average. The author has also conducted interviews two times with each respondent. After completing the interview, each interview translated Bangle to English and also analyzed properly considering objectives of the study. There are very few of research studies have been conducted on yaba addiction in Bangladesh. For enriching the findings, the author reviewed research studies which were conducted on yaba addiction in Thailand. Many international journals, local journals, and newspaper (which related to study) were reviewed by the author for the better understanding and enriching the findings of the study. For the panel data, the author used annual reports of the Department of Narcotics Control of Bangladesh's government.

4. FINDINGS OF STUDY

4.1 Peer Groups Influence

Bliss with honest, defeat with evil. Good peer groups lead youth in an honest way and bad peer groups lead youth in the evil's way. Peer

groups are a great facilitating factor in youth life. Peer pressure is the key influencing factor of yaba addiction among youth.

According to the study, 60 percent of participants initiated with yaba addiction due to peer group influences directly and indirectly. Among them, 40 percent of participants have mentioned peer groups pressure as the reason to initiate with yaba addiction.

I went to my home on a public holiday. One night, around at 11.00pm, my friends and I were gossiping in a shop in my village. One of my friends told me "do you take yaba ever? I said "no". But they persuaded me and told that ' yaba helps to increase power, it gives pleasure. If you take yaba, you can awake the whole night and we can enjoy the night'. I could not refuse their request and I was also curious about yaba and wanted to enjoy that night with my friend. Then, I took yaba [Age 22].

Among 60 percent, 15 percent of respondents felt indirect pressure to use yaba in order to socialize and spend more time with their friends. Among participants, a 23 years old female has initiated herself with yaba because she wanted to get along with her friends.

I was a good student. I never miss my class without major reasons. I had a boyfriend and loved him. He was addicted to yaba. I never wanted to damage our relationship and also wanted to enjoy more times with him. At first, I initiated myself with the cigarette and then, yaba because I wanted to socialize with my friends [Age 23].

4.2 Curiosity

Curiosity is a natural part of life. Curiosity for something bad is harmful to itself. Three participants mentioned ' curiosity' as the reason for using yaba.

I took yaba because of my curiosity. I just wanted to see its effect on my body. In the vacation period of university, I was in my home. One night at the time of gossiping with my friends offered yaba and I took because I was also curious about it. [Age 22]

Among the participants who have used other types of the drug before yaba, their curiosity of consuming yaba was even less consequential.

They explained that they interested in trying yaba because they thought yaba would bring more happiness than other drugs.

Before trying yaba, I was addicted to cigarette and ganja (weed). I tried yaba simply as a continuation of curiosity in trying anything new (any drugs) that it seemed like it might be fun. It was normal for me [Age 21].

4.3 Extra Power & Entertainment

Eight respondents mentioned that 'extra energy' is one of the reasons for taking yaba. They seemed that yaba gives more energy and make them tireless.

In the short run, yaba is very powerful which stimulates with the central nervous system and have a long-lasting effect. It increases alertness, wakefulness, physical activity, and body temperature" [7]. But yaba leads to rapid heart pressure, blood pressure and psychological disorder in the long run [7]. Yaba users are not aware of the long run health effects. They took yaba as the source of energy and continued the process.

I am a truck driver. I took yaba because it increased the interest in food and increased working energy. I could work for a long period without feeling tired. I took three or four pills daily [age 32].

On the other hand, four participants have mentioned that 'entertainment' is another reason for taking yaba.

I am a college student. I took yaba first time in DJ party and it helped me enjoy the night without any break (tired). After finishing school period, I was going every day to my friend's house for taking yaba and we entertained the whole night and also played FIFA online football game [age 21].

4.4 Parent's Unconsciousness

Family is the oldest and most important social institution for teaching social norms and values for youth. Parents are the key of a family and they protect children from any malevolent activities. Children mostly fall victim to depression and isolation because of the family's unawareness and carelessness. In the study, two participants have also mentioned that 'parent's negligence' is a reason for taking yaba.

I live in Dhaka city and am the only daughter of parents. But my parents lived in London as immigrants. I missed them and felt alone without them. My friends and I took yaba every day and I enjoyed. It helped me to forget loneliness and depression [Age 19].

4.5 Yaba is a Threat for Youth

Yaba has become a threat to the youth of Bangladesh. Youth initiate themselves to yaba everyday influenced by internal factors (i.e. entertainment, energy and emotional needs) and external factors (i.e. peers pressure). Youths and students of private universities and colleges are also targeted by the yaba dealers.

We choose students of colleges, private and public universities to sell our products because nobody generally suspects colleges and universities students. They are the profitable and safe zone for us because we easily access to them. Basically, I never face the administration problem when I supplied yaba [Age 37, a yaba dealer].

Yaba addiction leads youth toward a chaotic life and they are being detached slowly from family and social norms.

Momi is the only daughter of her parents. Her parents live in London as immigrants but they left their daughter in Dhaka city for educational purpose. Lacking family regulation and parental concerns, she engaged herself with yaba addicted peers. She also initiated herself in yaba addiction. Like as Momi, many youths have involved themselves to yaba addiction in study area because of the same reason. When Momi's parents knew about her that was late, she was fully addicted to yaba. Then, they came back to save and control their daughter from yaba addiction but they failed. One day, Momi's mother interrupted her to take yaba. As a result, Momi hearted her mother in the head and it was bleeding. She also behaved badly with other members of her family [Pseudo name, Age 19].

Yaba addiction causes rapid erosion of educational and cultural values [9]. At first, the students of universities and colleges seemed that they took yaba to study overnight before exam days because yaba increases wakefulness (it stimulates the central nervous system) [7]. But they are not concern about side effects of yaba in

the long run. It destroys a student like as slow poison. Yaba addiction leads to mental disorder and memory loss in the long run [7].

Her name is Maria. In 2016, she got admitted herself at spring semester in a private university of Bangladesh. She was a good student. She initiated herself with cigarette and yaba by influencing her boyfriend and her peer groups. She was addicted to yaba at an extreme level. Later, she nurtured in a narcotic rehabilitation center for two months. But she did not avoid herself from yaba and it affected her study badly. As a result, she failed in the different courses in 3rd semester. For this reason, university authority did not give permission for the next semester [Pseudo name, age 23].

Crime and drug relationship is interactive [10]. Drug addiction increases the probability of (a person's) involvement in criminal activities and it (criminal activities) increases gradually [11]. For youth (i.e. student) 'financing' [12] for yaba is the main and initial factor of involving himself in criminal activities. Initially, yaba consumers get involved in micro crimes like stealing money, gold, and valuable instrument from their house.

Riaz, a student at class ten, he was also yaba addicted. Every day, he took yaba but he had no income source for buying yaba. He managed money illegally. One day, he stole 2 lakh Taka from his house and spent all in taking yaba [Pseudo name, Age 17].

Yaba addiction decreases the sense of 'self-control' [13]. They can do any crime even murder if someone interrupted them in consuming of yaba or in funding for yaba. Small crimes encourage occurring serious crimes. Similarly, yaba users have engaged themselves with big crimes from small crimes.

Oishee Rahman killed her parents, police inspector Mahfuzur Rahman & Sapna Rahman because they interrupted her to take yaba. Oishee was involved with yaba addicted friends and she also initiated herself with yaba. When her parent known that their daughter addicted to yaba, they tried to control and save their child by imprisoning at home for abstaining from her friends. But yaba addicted Oishee lost the sense of thinking about righteous or right-wrong judgment. She thought her parents are her enemy because they did not allow her to

take yaba. For this reason, she did not hesitate to kill her parents [14].

5. DISCUSSION

This paper analyzed the causes which influenced the youth to initiate yaba in Cox's Bazar city, Bangladesh'. The study also explores how yaba is going to be a threat for the youth in the research area; in generally in Bangladesh. The study found that individual factors and social factors both influenced youth to initiate themselves towards yaba addiction. But individual influencing factors were the key causes of initiating to yaba addiction rather than social factors. Peer group pressure was the dominant influencing factor to yaba initiation; other studies have also mentioned it as a major factor to yaba initiation [1,3,7,12,15]. In participants, lack of social norms, values and families rules were observed as explicit or implicit factors to initiate with yaba. Peer groups play a determining role in adolescence period of youth. Good and bad peer groups always lead to positive and negative behavior respectively. The study found that 60 percent of respondents initiated themselves to yaba addiction because they were influenced by peer groups. Peer pressure was the key factor of accessing to yaba addiction and there was interlink between peer groups pressure and other factors in the study directly and indirectly. Some participants mentioned that they initiated themselves to yaba because they wanted to socialize or "belong to" with certain peer groups [15].

The study also identified that 'curiosity' and 'extra power and energy' as individual factors which influenced youth to initiate with yaba addiction and few studies have mentioned those factors as reasons of drug addiction [3,7,15]. Respondents told that they initiated with yaba due to curiosity but the percentage was low. Although yaba is a powerful drug which stimulates the central nervous system and increases alertness, wakefulness and physical activity in the short runs [7]. The study found that a small percent of the participant mentioned 'extra power and energy' as a reason for beginning to yaba addictions. A study has mentioned that youth engages with drug addiction because of family strife and lack of parental support [15]. The study found that 20 percent of the participants involved themselves in yaba addiction due to negligence of their parents (lacking parental support) and 70 percent parents of the participants were not concern about their children's activities.

Drug addiction causes erosion of cultural and social norms, mental disorder and loss of self-control which encourages youth to perform crimes like as stealing to even murder [7,9,11,13]. A study found that there was a positive relationship with drug addiction and crimes [10]. The study found that yaba addiction increased the propensity of committing crimes among youth and it has a positive relationship with crimes. For financing of yaba, they (youth) got involved in micro crimes like as stealing money, gold, and even hijacking. Yaba addiction encourages consumers committing major crimes as murder. The study has analyzed the case of *Oishee Rahman* who killed her parents because they interrupted her to take yaba.

6. CONCLUSION

The paper has explored the internal and external influencing factors to yaba initiation of youth in the study area. The study also explained that yaba is going to be a threat to youth and students. Bad peer groups always lead youth to wrongdoing and good peer groups always lead youth in the right way. Peer group pressure was a dominant influencing factor to yaba addiction; as 60 percent of participants engaged themselves to yaba addiction due to influences by peer groups. 25 percent of respondents have mentioned that 'entertainment and energy' as a reason for initiating themselves toward yaba addiction because they thought yaba as a source of energy. The study has identified that 20 percent participants involved themselves in yaba addiction due to negligence of their parents (lacking parental support) and among them, 70 percent parents of respondents were not concern about their children's activities. Many youths of Cox's Bazar city did not know about the long term side effects of yaba addiction. Youth are also targeted by yaba dealers. They targeted mainly students of universities and colleges because they are the safe and profitable zone for yaba dealers. Universities and colleges authorities are not concerned about protecting their students from the risk of taking yaba and other types of drugs. Yaba addiction has become an endemic for Bangladesh. It has become a big challenge to fight against yaba trafficking for Bangladesh.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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