

Journey of recovering from drug addiction in Jerusalem

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ABSTRACT:

ADDICTION IS A BRAIN DISEASE AND ITS TREATMENT ARE POSSIBLE, BUT RECOVERY CAN TAKE SOME TIME, DRUG ADDICTION OFTEN REQUIRES TREATMENT THROUGHOUT A PERSON'S LIFE. IN MANY CASES OF RECOVERY WITHOUT DRUG USE THE ADDICT MAY RETURN TO RELAPSE, WHICH MEANS THAT HE BEGINS TO USE AGAIN. THIS CASE STUDY IS DESIGNED TO SEE PEOPLE IN RECOVERY BECOME MORE VISIBLE IN THEIR COMMUNITY, AND AIMED TO PROOF THAT: LONG-TERM ADDICTION RECOVERY IS A REALITY AND TO BE AN EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT FROM THE SUFFERING AND RECOVERY FROM DRUG ADDICTS. TO ACHIEVE THAT, IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS USED WITH A MAN WHO HAVE USED SEVERAL TYPES OF DRUGS FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS SINCE HE WAS YOUNG. OVER A FOUR-MONTH PERIOD, THE MAN WAS INTERVIEWED IN PERSON APPROXIMATELY TWICE PER MONTH. HE HAS BEEN CLEAN AND SOBER FOR 19 YEARS AND HIS FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHT. ALTHOUGH HE SPENT 15 YEARS IN DRUG ABUSE AND SALE OF SEVERAL TYPES OF DRUGS, AND ALL THE SUFFERING THAT ACCOMPANIES THE ABUSE LIKE THE GO

OF MIND; SELF, FAMILY, FRIENDS AND LIFE NEGLECT AND LACK OF RELIGION DUE TO HIS DRUG USE. BUT FINALLY, HE UNDERWENT AN INTEGRATED RECOVERY PROGRAM AFTER SUFFERING SEVERAL RELAPSES IN THE PAST. LACK OF AWARENESS, CURIOSITY, HIGH PREVALENCE OF DRUGS, AND THE ABSENCE OF ASSOCIATIONS FOR TREATMENT, ALL OF THESE FACTORS FROM KAMIL'S POINT OF VIEW HELP TO CONTINUE DRUG ABUSE BY YOUNG PEOPLE. HE IS CURRENTLY A VOLUNTEER FOR DRUG ABUSE PREVENTION IN SOME SPECIALIZED SOCIETIES LIKE ASDIQ AL TAYEB. KAMIL CREDITS HIS RELIGIOSITY, LOVE FOR HIS FAMILY AND DESIRE TO CONTINUE SERVING OTHERS IN HIS COMMUNITY AS FACTORS IN HIS SUCCESS AT REMAINING ALCOHOL AND DRUG FREE.

KEYWORDS: JERUSALEM; DRUG ADDICTION; DRUG RECOVERY; RELAPSE .

I INTRODUCTION

Addiction is a brain disease because drugs affect the brain and how it works. Although addicts want to stop taking drugs, they cannot. Getting drugs can become more important than their loved ones, parents, work and life goals. Treatment of drug addiction is possible, but recovery can take some time, drug addiction often requires treatment throughout a person's life. In many cases of recovery without drug use, the addict may return to relapse, which means that he begins to use again. Relapse requires more treatment until it stops taking drugs again.

In 2013, there were 246 million people globally who use drugs (PWUD) aged between 15 and 64 years [1]. In 2014,

22.5 million people aged 12 or older, in the United States who needed treatment for a problem related to the use of alcohol or illicit drugs. Of those 22.5 million people, however, only 2.1 million adults received treatment at a specialty facility, making recovery even more challenging [2]. Illicit drugs spread widely in the Mediterranean region [3]. However, it is difficult to estimate the extent of illicit drug use in Arab countries because of the limited availability of research [4]. It is reported that the prevalence of cannabis abuse over life was 3.9%, in a study of adolescents in Palestinian schools between the ages of 14-16 years [5].

People who use drugs (PWUD) are at high risk of developing drug abuse or drug dependence disorders, characterized by increased drug tolerance and withdrawal symptoms when use is reduced or discontinued. In Palestine, the Palestinian Ministry of Health reported that the incidence of mental disorders associated with addiction was 1.8 per 100,000 population in 2006. During 2012, the Directorate-General for Mental Health of the Palestinian Ministry of Health reported that 73 new cases of drug dependence had been referred to clinics Community Mental Health [6].

Most people who succeed in treatment commit to a lifelong process of recovery: getting more treatment when needed; living a healthy lifestyle; and relying on family, friends, and others in recovery for support.

Objectives: This case study is designed to see people in recovery become more visible in their community. People in healing need to be seen as positive in themselves and in what they can do to people and communities alike. This study aims to

proof that: long-term addiction recovery is a reality and to be an educational development from the suffering and recovery from drug addicts.

II METHODOLOGY

This case study is a case of a man who have used several types of drugs for a number of years since he was young and describes the healing of addiction and back to society. We examine from an ecological framework the man's experience with drug addiction, treatment, and recovery and recounts his situations through each [7]. This research uses in-depth interviews as its data source. Further, these studies contain direct quotes from the man orally sharing his thoughts. His quotes are not edited or changed by any kind of systems for the purpose of capturing the thoughts of the men.

This descriptive study profile one specific individual and is not representative in nature. However, the experiences and behavior of this man are not atypical of men recovering from drug addiction [8]. Selection of the man was determined by the consultation with a committee of specialists from drug abuse associations, competent police department and a researcher from Al-Istiqlal University. The committee nominated individual based on the former addicts experiences with addiction, treatment, and recovery, his strength of commitment to sobriety, and his willingness to share his stories with the public.

The man participated in the study voluntarily and was not paid with the assumption that the project would contribute to

people's understanding of drug addiction and recovery. Over a four-months period, the man was interviewed in person approximately twice per month. During the interviews the man was made as comfortable as possible in his own environments. He was interviewed alone and asked a series of primarily open-ended questions designed to elicit his story.

Most of the time, during the interviews the man was comfortable, quiet and enthusiastic about the subject and the interviews were conducted without any hindrances. When man felt tired or boredom from questions, he went out break until he was ready again. When he responded with vague or ambiguous answers, I asked for further questions to clarify his answers. When available, his case managers, guides and other important individuals were interviewed for verification and additional information. At the end of the project, the man expressed his pleasure in participating the study.

III RESULTS

A Participant's Identity

The participant's name has been changed to "Kamil" to protect his real identity. Kamil, forty-nine years old, is a mature Palestinian, normal, in good health and optimistic man, who is non-refugee, born and resides in Jerusalem. He has seven children, four sons and three daughters. He also has 13 grandchildren of his four married children. The three remaining children are single and live with him and his wife in the same house he owns in Jerusalem.

B Participant's Relationships and Psychological Attributes

Kamil's family links are normal. His parents died 25 years ago when he was 24 years old. He has 7 brothers and 4 sisters and he is the smallest brother between them. No one from his family members have ever taken drugs. Kamil's wife lived with him without any problems. "My wife understood my condition during the drug abuse period and became very happy after the recovery. She has great credit in encouraging and helping me during the treatment period".

Regarding social relations, Kamil says he does not complain about the lack of friends and he has a number of close friends nowadays. "During the drug abuse period, I sometimes felt lonely, I had few friends and they were not standing with me and avoiding me for their reputation" Kamil, a well-mannered man with a strong personality, is very excited when he tells his story. During the interview, he was courageous, open-minded and proud of his health and psychological condition. He says he has no difficulty dealing with things and with others. He is passionate about not using drugs to please God first and love the family and society that accommodates him.

Kamil, has a specialized course in counselling for drug users, which enabled him to give lectures in schools, municipalities and institutions on drug abuse and prevention. He also has a desire to serve people in society by providing a realistic self-model. His skills and abilities include counselling, public speaking, and community organization, in addition to reading and reciting the Quran.

C The consequences of drug addiction

Kamil began gradually using drugs and alcohol at the age of 14 years. Because of the poor economic conditions of his family, and due to the teachers' ignorance of his case, he left the school at the age of 14, although his parents wanted him to continue his education. "I was beaten from my father sometimes in order to don't leave the school but they did not accept my point of view or even the opportunity to express myself". "During this period, I loved a girl in school and I was sending her letters by my close friend. Then I discovered that my friend had let me down and betrayed me and he had loved the girl, which made me hate life and enter into a period of bleak and boredom, all this also encouraged me to leave school and go to work".

He worked in a coffee shop at the age of 14 in Jerusalem and was frequented by a lot of alcohol addicts and drug users. He started drinking a little alcohol, once or couple of times a day, but he left it for a number of reasons: Kamil was disgusted from the taste of alcohol, watch what has been done by drunkards, such as: inappropriate work, problems with others and vandalism. In addition to vomiting and side effects, all these reasons led to the full abandonment of alcohol and think of alternative drug abuse in the same cafe. So Kamil started his journey with drugs by smoking hashish and marijuana 3 times daily in the beginning, after that, he smoked it all the day. After some years he began to take non-injectional drugs such as heroin, methadone, opium, morphine and other analgesics that were prevalent in that period. But Kamil did not use injecting drugs for the rest of his life. Heroin was most commonly used by Kamil. He started once to twice at a rate of 1 mg per day. After that it increased until it reached five grams a day. "in order to get the drugs which, I need every day, I started selling drugs and I

sometimes stole in order to save money to buy drugs". Kamil said: "there is no love of drug abuse but the lack of awareness, curiosity, high prevalence of drugs, and the absence of associations for treatment led me to continuous drug abuse".

During the period of drug abuse, Kamil was arrested and imprisoned nine times. The longest time he spent in prison was for three years. He used drugs in prison with most of the prisoners.

D *Participant's recovery and present circumstances*

During the 15 years of drug abuse Kamil entered several times for treatment and recovery from drugs, but every time he came back to drug abuse and relapsed, due to the following reasons: The desire to abuse and disregard the subject, lack of confidence from the family and other people, lack of acceptance of the community, lack of money and work, the absence of encouraging institutions in addition to keeping is bad company.

According to Kamil, the arrival to a state of frustration, thinking of death, the desire for cleanliness from drugs and repentance to God in addition to fear from God were the motives for his approach to treatment and recovery.

During his journey with drug use, Kamil entered many places where he sought treatment, like: Asdiq al Tayeb, al Nour wal Hoda, al Maqdesy and others near Jerusalem. Last time, 18 years ago, Kamil entered the association of Asdiq al Tayeb for drug recovery, underwent a treatment and recovery program by the association for two months, where he spent the first twenty days in order to get rid of physical symptoms.

"All they gave me in the Association of Asdiq al Tayeb during the recovery period was useful. I was complaining at first about the harshness of the program. We would not be allowed to go home one day a week to spend time with parents and prevent me from going outside the assembly. All these harsh actions at the time, I knew after the recovery period that it was very important and helped me recover from drugs. I was constantly following up with the support groups "

Kamil maintains good physical health in general and he lives with his family members naturally and happy in his current life. In addition, he participates actively in mosques. He is currently a volunteer for drug abuse prevention in some specialized societies, as well as his fulltime work as a truck driver.

E Success Factors in Treatment

Despite the many unfortunate circumstances that Kamil experienced during the period of drug abuse such as imprisonment, diseases, family disputes, lack of friends and work, asylum and resorting to violation of the law and thefts. In addition to angering God Almighty. Kamil regained his health and family, and now he works to help others in his society recover from drug addiction. He hopes that God will be pleased with him.

What factors helped Kamil succeed in treatment where many others failed? "I believe in God and fear him, as a head of a family, I started to think about myself and the situation I have reached, I have reached the bottom, I have discovered the mistakes that occurred along the length of the drug use, in addition to the strong will. All these factors helped me in the treatment and the most important thing to resort to God" He said.

IV CONCLUSIONS

Kamil dramatically illustrate the strength and capacity for positive change of others overcoming drug addiction. Their powerful experiences contribute to the understanding of the process of addiction, treatment and recovery. More importantly, Kamil bravely shared his story with the intent of helping others, their families overcome the negative effects of drug abuse. People in recovery have known that there is more they can do to show people in similar societies that there are many of them: they can be great fathers, employees, employers, friends, partners, and they can be responsible, trustworthy, honest etc., and generally, be a very positive asset to their community [9]. For policy makers and professionals interested in reducing the destructive problems of substance abuse, ethnographic monitoring is essential to ensure that intervention remains relevant to the target population and meets their changing needs [10].

Kamil's case is compatible with previous studies [9] in many of the catalysts for the treatment and recovery of drug abuse, such as: A new start to something better; longing to get better; freedom from fear and isolation; healing mind, body and relationships after struggling with addiction; breaking the chain of addiction; living normal; staying clean and sober by any means; living honestly; sense of pride and achievement; free from dependence; very brave; a better quality of life; growing

old with dignity and happiness, as without these opportunities, it is difficult for people to move forward and maintain a recovery. From Kamil's point of view, the recovery of drug addiction means many challenges such as: finding appropriate treatment, treatment price, staying away from stimuli and then maintaining a strong support system, in addition to avoiding relapse.

Kamil's case is compatible with previous studies [2,11,12] as many of the risk factors of illicit drug use, such as: adolescence; having too much spare time; social environment such as family structure; the family structure during childhood such as poor parental control, the absence of parents in general, poor family communication and family problems; the influence of friends; imprisonment; availability and accessibility to drugs; affluence and poverty; unemployment and hard-working conditions increases exposure and the risk of illicit drug use.

The unique socioeconomic context in Palestine, characterized by political and economic tensions, has created conditions that facilitate the spread of illicit drug use. Palestinians face political violence, house demolitions, arrests, restrictions to movement, and encroachment on their land. Illicit drug use is used by Palestinians as a coping mechanism while living under these harsh, and often humiliating, conditions. Palestinian youth experiencing disenfranchisement and alienation from their own culture are those primarily affected by these conditions [13].

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B A conflict of interest

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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