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A Qualitative Research on the Process of Drug Addict Individuals Accessing Substances

Musa Gürel[1] ▌ Emre Bilgiseven[2] ▌ İlker Aktürk[3] ▌ Ömer Miraç Yaman[4]

[1] Dr.
İstanbul /Türkiye
ORCID: 0000-0003-4132-1700
E-Mail:
musa.gurel@hotmail.com

[2] Psychologist,
İstanbul/ Türkiye
ORCID: 0009-0004-0390-5101
E-Mail:
yunusemrebilgiseven@gmail.com

[3] Dr., Istanbul University
Cerrahpaşa, Graduate School of
Educational Sciences, Social
Work Istanbul / Türkiye
ORCID: 0000-0001-9626-3275
E-Mail:
illkerakturk@gmail.com

[4] Prof. Dr., Istanbul University
Cerrahpaşa, Graduate School of
Educational Sciences, Social
Work Istanbul/ Türkiye
ORCID: 0000-0001-9989-8575
E-Mail:
omermirac@gmail.com

Corresponding Author:
Musa Gürel

Abstract

This study aims to thoroughly examine the processes through which individuals who use substances access these substances. The main focuses of the study are the channels and locations of substance access, the process leading from substance use to procurement, communication with sellers, and applied privacy strategies. This research is designed according to qualitative research methods. During data collection, a semi-structured interview form was preferred, and interviews were conducted with 10 substance users. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive analysis methods, and the results were interpreted. The findings are presented under four themes: "Initiation of Substance Use, Methods of Accessing Substances and Privacy Strategies, Language and Trust Relationships in the Substance Acquisition Process, Locations for Substance Procurement, Risky Situations, and Social Consequences." According to the results of the study, it is highlighted that the process of starting substance use due to curiosity and experimentation, often influenced by social environment and friendships, turns into addiction, and individuals usually begin using substances between the ages of 14 and 18. The study finds that while experienced users resort to traditional neighborhood channels like street dealers, the new generation prefers social media platforms (such as Telegram, Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook) and certain games (like PUBG mobile, Minecraft) as covert channels. It has also been determined that the language and communication methods used in the process of procuring substances are developed using various names and jargons specific to different substances. On the other hand, the need to secure financial resources for continuous consumption and procurement during the transition from substance use to procurement often leads individuals to illegal actions such as theft, robbery, and violence, as well as to dangerous and risky behaviors.

Keywords: *Substance Use, Substance Supply Routes, Addiction, Substance Shopping Language*

Öz

Bu çalışma, madde kullanıcısı bireylerin maddeye erişim süreçlerini derinlemesine incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmanın odaklandığı başlıca konular; maddeye erişim kanalları ve mekanları, madde kullanımından temin etmeye götüren süreç, satıcılarla kurulan iletişim ve uygulanan gizlilik stratejileridir. Bu araştırma, nitel araştırma yöntemine uygun olarak tasarlanmıştır. Veri toplama sürecinde yarı yapılandırılmış bir mülakat formu tercih edilmiş ve 10 madde kullanıcısı ile görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Toplanan veriler, betimsel analiz yöntemi kullanılarak analiz edilmiş ve sonuçlar yorumlanmıştır. Bulgular ise "Madde Kullanımına Başlangıç, Maddeye Erişim Yolları ve Gizlilik Stratejileri, Madde Edinim Sürecinde Kullanılan Dil ve Güven İlişkisi, Madde Temin Yerleri, Riskli Durumlar ve Sosyal Sonuçlar olmak üzere 4 tema ile adlandırılarak verilmiştir. Araştırmanın sonuçlarına göre; sosyal çevre ve arkadaşlık ilişkileri, merak ve denemeyle madde kullınımına başlanan süreç, bağımlılığa dönüştüğü, kişinin madde kullanımına 14-18 yaş aralığında başladığı öne çıkmaktadır. Araştırmada, madde teminindeki yöntemlere bakıldığında; deneyimli kullanıcılar, sokak satıcıları gibi geleneksel mahalle kanallarına başvururken, yeni nesil kullanıcılar ise sosyal medya platformları (Telegram, İnstagram, Whatsapp ve Facebook) ve bazı oyunları (PUBG mobile, Minecraft gibi) gizli kanal olarak kullanmayı tercih etmektedirler. Ayrıca bağımlı bireylerin madde temin etme sürecindeki dil ve iletişim yöntemleri, çeşitli maddelere özgü farklı isimler ve jargonlar kullanılarak oluşturulduğu saptanmıştır. Öte yandan madde kullanımından temine geçiş aşamasında, sürekli tüketim ve temin için gerekli maddi kaynakların sağlanması zorunluluğu, bireyleri hırsızlık, gasp ve şiddet gibi yasa dışı eylemlere, aynı zamanda tehlikeli ve riskli davranışlara ittiği görülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Madde Kullanımı, Madde Temin Yolları, Bağımlılık, Madde Alışveriş Dili*

Introduction

Substance use has become a progressively prevalent and multifaceted issue in society in recent years, capable of causing harm to the social environment. Numerous factors influence an individual's engagement in substance use. These are typically individual or societal factors such as stress, trauma, social pressure, genetic predisposition, and curiosity (Briand & Blendy, 2010; Rhee et al., 2003, p.1262). The initiation process of substance use can vary depending on an individual's life circumstances and can lead to the development of addiction following the individual's introduction to the substance. Initially perceived by individuals merely as a means of relaxation and escape, substance use over time becomes a part of daily routines, characterized by a behavior-stimulus relationship, and evolves into a habit with repeated use (Titus, 2008, p.39). It is indicated that individuals who use substances often start this habit during adolescence (Sheehan et al., 1998, p.314). On the other hand, it is observed that substance use often begins due to reasons like the need for acceptance by peers and the environment at an early age, the desire to gain prestige, and conforming or imitating others (Cousijn et al., 2018, p. 2; Kramer et al., 2009, p.56). In a study conducted by Titus et al. (2008) on 85 cases, it was found that 75% of adolescents' reasons for starting substance use could be explained by just two factors: peer influence and experimentation.

For individuals who start using substances for various reasons, over time, the most crucial issue becomes the procurement and supply of the substance. Substance use can be accelerated with easy access to the substance. People often begin using substances without considering the risk of addiction and believing that they can control themselves. However, this situation often leads to addiction, facilitated by the ease of access (Bahar, 2018, p.8). Although the methods of accessing substances vary from individual to individual, this situation often involves collaboration with other substance users, dealers, or intermediaries (Baggio et al., 2016). Furthermore, diversifying methods to access substances brings a variety of effects and

allows for the selection of specific locations and the development of a unique communication language among users (Spohr et al., 2019, pp.143-150). In this context, one of the common methods of procuring substances is through street dealers, and particularly in today's era of technology, social media platforms and various applications can be used as covert channels for substance procurement. Additionally, another increasingly common method of substance procurement worldwide is through crypto markets. Crypto markets are online venues where drugs are purchased, protected by technology that allows for anonymous communication and uses currencies (e.g., Bitcoin) designed to be difficult to trace (Bachhuber & Merchant, 2017). In Aldridge et al.'s (2018) study on online purchasing, it is emphasized that considering people will continue to buy drugs, crypto markets may offer several advantages over offline purchases in terms of personal and public health. The use of information systems for this purpose is leading to the emergence of new types of crimes in the virtual environment (Bahar, 2018, p.13). This situation makes monitoring substance procurement in various dimensions and environments even more challenging.

Individuals seeking substances may seek help from their friends and family to access them. With the diversification of these access channels, communication between substance dealers and users is becoming more concealed. The social structure and culture in which substance users are embedded can influence their substance-seeking processes and subsequently shape the pathways they choose for procurement, as suggested by Bourdieu (1977). Furthermore, Sandberg's (2008) study demonstrates that individuals involved in substance dealing often represent a situation that emerges as a result of the interaction between a marginalized environment and a specific social context. The existence of a marginalized environment can lead individuals towards different illegal behaviors as part of a crime-prone demeanor. Thus, an individual who starts using substances due to mere curiosity, peer influence, or economic conditions may diversify their means of accessing substances within this different habitus.

In this context, individuals who interact with drug dealers can encounter three distinct groups (Hunt, 1990, p. 190; Ünlü & Demir, 2012, p.163). The first group consists of individuals who are both users and dealers. These individuals often transition into dealers after beginning as substance users, engaging in this role to secure substances at a lower cost, ensure access to higher-quality products (Fairlie, 2002, p.551), and provide for their friends (Atkyns & Hanneman, 1974, p.37). Preble & Casey (1969) have noted that this can be a means to sustain their addictions. On the other hand, this procurement process makes dealers feel like the protagonists of their lives (Sandberg, 2008). The second group comprises individuals from another profession (Ünlü & Demir, 2012, p.163). These individuals, who make up the majority of the market and are forced to leave their initial professions due to economic reasons (Macit, 2018, p.6; Guy & Chomczyński, 2023), see substance dealing as a temporary means of livelihood. In Fairlie's (2002) study, it was noted that 47% of substance dealers were employed, 44% were unemployed, 7% were government employees, and 1% were self-employed individuals. The third group consists of those who deal substances more professionally. This group includes individuals who are part of specific communities or deliver substances to individuals through intergenerational transmission among family members (Macit, 2018, p. 7). According to Ömer and Demir's (2012) research, dealers who are not addicted themselves often view drug dealing as more of a professional occupation.

Overall, the primary aim of this study is to understand how individuals who seek substances on the street reach dealers, what kinds of places they use in the process, their methods of communication, and how they establish conditions of secrecy. There is a notable lack of studies focused specifically on finding and buying substances on the street, with a direct emphasis on the street environment itself. The absence of comprehensive research on individuals engaged in substance-seeking highlights a gap, particularly as existing studies often discuss the role of substance dealers within the process, leading to an incomplete understanding of the entire scenario. Therefore, the research concentrates on how individuals access substances following their initial use, the various environments where substances are obtained, the nature of communication established in the acquisition process, and identifying the social risks associated with this access process. The understanding of the initiation process of substance use and the factors leading individuals to procure substances offers an opportunity for a holistic view of the issue.

Method

This research employs a qualitative research design to explore the methods used by substance users to procure substances, their strategies for maintaining secrecy, the language utilized in accessing substances, and the potential risks involved in this process. While structuring the research, the phenomenology technique from qualitative research methods was utilized. Phenomenology aims to derive meaning from individuals' own experiences and to conduct in-depth examinations of topics that are recognized but little known in detail (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006, p.224). The phenomenological research design was chosen to help explore the process of users' relationships with dealers and understand the dynamics behind this process.

Sample

In the study, interviews were conducted with ten substance users residing in Istanbul. The snowball sampling method was used to reach the participants. Accordingly, the research team's initial contact was made through the guidance of experts actively working with substance users in the field. In the subsequent stages, additional participants were recruited for the study based on direct referrals from both the experts and the initial participants. The criteria for inclusion in the sample were that the individuals should have been actively using substances for at least two years and have played an active role in the substance procurement process. On the other hand, limiting the number of participants to 10 in this study is related to data saturation in qualitative research, where the research is concluded once no new information or themes are observed in the data

(Baltacı, 2018). In qualitative studies, the fundamental point regarding how many people to interview is centered around reaching data saturation, with the recommendation to conclude the research when no new insights or aspects emerge (Creswell, 2016, p.189). All the study participants are male, aged 18-50. Detailed socio-demographic data of the participants are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Socio-Demographic Data of the Participants

Participant	Age	Marital Status	Education Level	Occupation	Substance Used	Duration of Use
P1	27	Single	Middle School	Signboard Maker	Bonzai, Weed, Meth	11 years
P2	43	Married	Middle School	Farmer	Bonzai, Ecstasy, Weed, Meth	2 years
P3	32	Divorced	High School	Grilled Sheep Intestine Chef	Glue (Toulene), Weed, Cocaine	4 years
P4	40	Married	Elementary School	Freelance	Weed, Cocaine, Crack	30 years
P5	27	Single	Middle School	Pita Chef	Ecstasy, Weed, Meth	15 years
P6	28	Single	Elementary School	Plasterer, Painter	Heroin, Meth	14 years
P7	33	Married	College	Engineer	Heroin, Cocaine, Crack	18 years
P8	22	Single	High School	Tattoo Artist	Meth	7 years
P9	23	Single	Middle School	Textile Worker	Bonzai	5 years
P10	28	Married	High School	Baker	Lyrica, Crack	7 years

Data Collection Tools

In this research, in-depth interviews were employed as a data collection method. In-depth interviews are an integral part of qualitative research and enable a more detailed and holistic understanding of the foundations of social problems. This method allows researchers to delve into the depths of observed social issues and to grasp these problems comprehensively (Kümbetoğlu, 2015, p. 72). Within the scope of the study, data were collected using a semi-structured interview form containing 15 questions developed by the researcher. The questions in this research cover the reasons for individuals' initiation into substance use, the effects of this habit on their

social environments, and the methods of procurement. Additionally, they address the users' communication with dealers, privacy strategies, perceptions of trustworthiness, and the challenges and risks encountered in the procurement process. The questions also encompass substance users' involvement in illegal activities, use of coded language and jargon, and significant experiences during this process. In the process of developing the interview form, opinions were sought from experts with experience in working with substance users and academics who have conducted studies on addiction. Participation in the study was based entirely on voluntary consent. Before each interview, a consent form was presented to the participants, either verbally or in writing. Once these consents were obtained, the interviews commenced. Two participants did not consent to audio recording but allowed for written notes, while the remaining eight consented to audio recording. The interviews were conducted face-to-face at locations and venues deemed suitable by the participants.

Analysis of Data

The data of the research were examined according to the descriptive analysis technique. The purpose of descriptive analysis is for the researcher to reinterpret the findings obtained and convey them to the readers. In this process, pre-established themes from the data collection phase can be used, as well as new themes that emerge during the research process, which can be fully or partially integrated (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). In this study, a total of 296 minutes of audio recordings were transcribed for analysis. The transcription process resulted in 186 pages of raw transcript text, which was then used for coding. Approximately 323 codes were extracted from the text, and after eliminating repetitive codes, sub-themes and main themes containing the remaining codes were identified. Categories and headings were formed based on the main themes. Four themes emerged through final readings in line with the descriptive analysis technique. These are: *"Individual's Initiation into Substance Use," "Methods of Accessing Substances and Secrecy Strategies," "Language Used and Trust in the Substance Acquisition Process," and*

"Substance Procurement Locations, Risky Situations, and Social Consequences."

Findings

From the gathered data, four distinct themes emerged. The first theme delves into the various factors that contribute to an individual's beginning of substance use, attempting to understand the process that leads individuals to the need to procure substances. The second theme focuses on how substances are accessed, through what means and channels, and how this process is kept secret. The third theme focuses on the language used to access substances and how trust is built with the dealers. The final theme examines the types of locations/venues where substances are accessed, explores the potential risks associated with these, and identifies the possible social consequences arising from the entire substance procurement process.

Beginning Substance Use: Where, When, and How?

In this section, the theme explored is 'the beginning and evolution of substance use.' Here, a brief overview will be given of how, when, and where an individual starts using substances to understand the process that leads to the procurement of substances.

It is observed that in the process of substance use, the influence of peer groups and a sense of curiosity are predominantly highlighted. The notion of experimenting with substances out of curiosity within one's circle of friends, accompanied by the belief that 'trying it once won't hurt,' is a common statement mentioned by most participants.

"I was 16, with our friends in middle school, and there was this lane we called 'Lovers' Lane' where we'd hang out with girls. Someone asked if I wanted to try 'glue' (toulene). I said 'sure, I'll try it,' without knowing anything about it. It became a daily thing for a day or two. When 'glue' (toulene) seemed too mild, I moved on to marijuana. To be honest, my family had no idea. Curiosity was what got me started (P3, user for 4 years)."

"When I was a child, around 14-15 years old, I started [using substances] with a friend who was using at the time. I thought, 'Let's try it, it won't do any harm.' We smoked a bong and then I couldn't stop (P8, user for 7 years)."

Substance use that begins at an early age can continue for many years. It is observed that many of the participants started using substances during their adolescence. Additionally, it has been noted that times of celebration, such as army send-off parties, weddings, and birthday celebrations, also play a significant role in starting substance use.

"It wasn't any emotional state that got me started, but rather an army send-off party. Friends had gathered, and I joined them. Someone there had rolled a joint, you know, weed. Everyone was passing it around, taking a puff each. That's how the introduction happened, out of curiosity, really, just to see what it was like (P2, user for 2 years)."

On the other hand, during the adolescent period, feelings such as the need for acceptance, approval, being a role model, becoming a feared individual, emulation, idolizing, and aspiration are also influential components in an individual's initiation into substance use.

"I was under the impression it would magnify me. I thought it would exalt me. Now you're on the streets, I told myself, you need to be strong, I thought it would strengthen me. I mean, being accepted in the neighborhood and being that person who is pointed out, being different, I used to think it was something that would bring pride. I wanted to be called 'big brother', I wanted people to fear me (P6, user for 14 years)."

Unstable, incompatible, unsupported, or conflict-ridden family environments can pose a higher risk for individuals turning to substance use. Particularly, the father-son relationship is among the most significant factors influencing the initiation of substance use.

"When I was 13 years old, we left the mosque and a friend wanted to come to us. When we got home, my father kicked me out. Of course, I had a friend with me,

and I couldn't accept it. I went outside and saw an older guy with marijuana, and I got 2-3 pieces from him (P6, user for 14 years)."

P6 has addressed temporal processes in the onset of substance use and described the evolution of the habit using terms such as 'honeymoon period' and 'return to the starting point.'

"At first, you enter a honeymoon period. Like how people get happy when they get married, everything is good and beautiful, but gradually the body gets used to it and that level of pleasure decreases. After the honeymoon period, your addiction has already developed. Even if you want, you can't give it up. Then what do you do? Afterwards, to catch that initial high we always increase the dose. Then we become dependent on high doses. After this phase of dependency, our losses start. When the losses pile up, you completely hit rock bottom. You can never be happy again."

Methods of Accessing Substances and Secrecy Strategies

This part addresses how access to substances is obtained after the onset of substance use. In this regard, it is generally observed that when a person first starts using substances, they usually do not have direct access to a dealer. It is often revealed that the substance is obtained through the person who initially introduced them to substances.

"It's quite simple, really. The friend who first gets you to try it already has a source since he uses it himself. He then directs you. What is it that I want to get now, for example? Ecstasy, but I can't find it. I ask Ali. Ali directs me. I don't know the dealer. We exchange numbers with the dealer. And then, as time goes by... when you need it... (P3, user for 4 years)."

On the other hand, while the initial steps in substance use occur through acquaintances, it becomes evident that as dependency intensifies over time, substances are obtained by directly reaching out to dealers.

"If someone close to you uses drugs, this person becomes a mediator for you; they buy from the dealer and bring it to you. You use together, and this process continues

in this way for a while. However, over time and perhaps depending on financial means, as your dependency intensifies, there arises a need to meet the dealer directly and purchase from them (P1, user for 11 years)."

Furthermore, it is observed how creative and determined individuals who use substances can be in obtaining the substances they desire. Undoubtedly, P2's method of procuring substances using 'pigeons' during the COVID-19 pandemic underscores their determination.

"At the beginning of the pandemic, during the strictest periods, I was living in a village in Bursa. There were curfews, and we couldn't access substances then. I keep pigeons, racing pigeons. They can be released from Konya, Ankara, Eskişehir and return to my cage. I would take three to five pigeons with me. Police would ask where I was going, and I'd say I was taking them to the vet. I went to my dealer and left 5-6 pigeons, then called every three to five days. I'd say, 'Send one back to me.' He would tie it to their legs. So, in this way, you can also get access. For someone who uses substances, there's no such thing as impossible. The bird would arrive at my house, my village, even before I did."

Another method of substance procurement is through social media. While long-time users tend to prefer traditional street channels, it is observed that the new generation of substance users attempts to secure their supply via social media.

"Someone who wants to find it uses Facebook, Telegram, Instagram, etc. But there's this thing, as we are old users, we don't really engage much in that social media network. But these new kids who are using, they operate more through social media. Those of us who have been using for over 10 years tend to find it through street channels. But look at these new ones, who have been using for only 2 or 3 years, they don't even know what weed is and try to find it directly through social media (P1, user for 11 years)."

P6 similarly noted that social media platforms are the most common channels for procuring substances, and also mentioned that digital games like PUBG Mobile and Minecraft are actively used for this purpose.

"But most of my friends obtain it through Telegram, previously a lot through Facebook. How do the large amounts of money circulate in this business? Let me tell you that as well. By the kilo, those who we call Barons, they choose a certain game for themselves. For example, they make deals through games like PUBG, Minecraft. This has been happening in recent years."

Instead of using modern methods such as motorbike couriers, dealers can also distribute substances on foot or while working in different professions. Consequently, it is observed that individuals using substances can procure them in places like barbershops, çiğköfte (Turkish spicy meatball) shops, cafes, and coffee houses.

"For instance, there are itinerant sellers. And by couriers, I don't mean those on motorbikes, not them. Like you said, they can distribute these substances on foot. Someone could be working in a restaurant. For example, there was this guy in Istanbul, he was a kebab seller, he would drop off, and then leave (P5, user for 15 years)."

Language Used and Trust Relationship in the Substance Acquisition Process

The process of obtaining substances has revealed the critical role of trust and communication strategies. With the increase in substance use, the building and maintaining of this trust from the beginning of the addict's relationship with the dealer is vital for the continuity of the bilateral relationship, as understood from the participants' statements. P5 explains this situation as follows:

"The buyer must trust the dealer first. The dealer takes the money and then gives the stuff. He wouldn't give it to someone he doesn't know."

Dealers generally trust their buyers because they aim to make them dependent for future transactions. P4 has described this relationship as having a hundred percent trust rate:

"No, I mean, in the end, he is selling it, and you are buying it. There is a trust between the dealer and the buyer due to necessity. You already knew this, you do the math. The dealer might be suspicious of the buyer, but the trust is always one hundred percent."

Initially seen only as a customer, a buyer can, over time and with their economic contribution, attain a more valued position in the eyes of the dealer, which can lead the user from the position of a buyer to having the potential to become a dealer.

"So at first, look, initially everyone is a customer. Then, for example, you get along well with the dealer, you are loyal in paying your debts or he likes you, sees you're a good kid, he takes you under his wing. Then he gives you the first 5 grams. You bring the money, he gives you 10 grams, then 15 grams. Sell it, make the return, settle the account. He gives you a house, a car. Opens up possibilities for you (P8, user for 7 years)."

The economic power of the buyer influences how much 'credit' the dealer will extend to them. Moreover, most participants have stated that these mutual relationships are entirely based on self-interest.

"It's not really much about trust. If he knows you, knows you're from his neighborhood, if there's money involved. There's nothing beyond self-interest. So, when he gives you an extra 2-3 grams, he is actually using you. He thinks you will make a profit for him (P9, user for 5 years)."

In the context of a substance-dependent individual's process of obtaining substances, the language and communication methods used have also been considered. Different names and jargons are used for various substances. For example; *'meal'* for marijuana, *'wheel'* or *'tire'* for ecstasy, *'white'* or *'cheese'* for cocaine, *'stone'* or *'beşiktaş'*[1] for crack, 'Metin amca' or 'ice' for methamphetamine, 'sister' for bonzai, 'Mother Mary' for marihuana, and so on.

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[1] It is the name of a football team in Türkiye and is used as the street language of the users of the article.

"What I mean by coded language is, how much for a meal? What's meant by meal? Marijuana. For pills (ecstasy), they say 'wheel' or 'tire'. Because it's round. They call cocaine 'white'. They say 'cheese'. They say 'powder'. For 'stone', that's crack (P3, user for 3 years)."

"For instance, 'Is there any cold?' Another name for methamphetamine is 'ice'. Because it's ice, they ask, 'Is there any cold?' (P6, user 14 years)."

"For instance, some say 'Beşiktaş' when they want to buy crack. There are examples like 'uncle'. Back then, we used to call Bonzai 'foreign' or 'sister'. Sister for Bonzai, brother for Meth, or Uncle Metin², because it has started to become a label (P8, user for 7 years)."

On the other hand, terms used for substances can often be matched with amounts of money. For example, the term '500 lira' can be used to purchase a substance.

"For instance, I say, I'm bringing you the 500 lira I owe you. Where are you? What does that 500 lira correspond to? It means I want 500 lira worth of stuff (marijuana, heroin etc.) (P1, user for 11 years)."

The world of substance use is a complex and dangerous labyrinth. It has been observed that this labyrinth is usually navigated through coded language. Phrases like *'store is open'* or *'new cars have arrived'* are code words that mark the beginning of an agreement between the buyer and the dealer.

"For example, they send a message saying, 'new cars have arrived' or 'store is open' and so on. When they say 'store', it's clear what that person's business is. Or we say, 'Give me two cars'. (P7, user for 18 years)."

Individuals use coded phrases such as 'two cars,' 'two bags,' 'furniture maker,' or 'two apples' to indicate the quantity of the substance. This approach is considered a security measure for the buyer and the dealer. P10 explained this situation as follows:

"When it's over the phone, of course, the conversation becomes coded. For example, instead of directly talking about drugs, you ask how much to rent that car? If he wants double that amount, you would say, 'I'm coming to get two cars.' Not two bags, but 'I'm coming to get two cars' worth of rent from you. Or I'm coming to get two apples. Or he treats you like a grocer, or a furniture maker, think of any profession (P10, user for 7 years)."

Substance Procurement Locations, Risky Situations, and Social Consequences

Individuals using substances often seek out places and environments that vary to access these substances, and they undertake various risks in doing so. According to P2, the locations where substance transactions occur are typically inconspicuous, away from surveillance cameras, and include abandoned buildings, wooded areas, vehicles, or park-like regions.

"Like they say, a true believer finds another in Mecca, similarly. Usually, the places like park edges, dilapidated houses, areas like forests. Generally, they are places not so visible, without camera systems. Sometimes, the dealers, can even come to you. When they arrive in a car, you just get into the car, do the transaction without them leaving the car."

The locations for obtaining substances can occasionally be made on an impromptu basis. Furthermore, in districts or cities where dealing substances is prevalent, it has been observed that children are frequently employed in the streets for the procurement of these materials. Additionally, P10 notes that transactions involving substances are commonly conducted in establishments such as scrapyards and mobile phone stores;

"There are stalls, you know, and at a stall, it's usually just one person. That person's location is known. Either children stand there or the person themselves. So, the stalls are on the streets, somewhere on the street, could be a house, could be anything, a scrapyard, doesn't matter. You never know where it will be. It could be a mobile phone store. Only the locals know, we can't know. Wherever that person who sets up the stall is, that's the place. Of course, that's their place, their territory."

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² Street language in Türkiye

P4 states, *"Home. You go to a home. Yes, directly to the dealer's home. So, you either go to their home or they come to your place."* Similarly, P7 describes, *"You enter a house to purchase the stuff. The dealer doesn't come outside due to fear. Questions like 'Will they catch me? Will they see me? Will they record me on video?' compel the dealer to open up their home to you. They turn it into a trade area."* These accounts indicate that the transaction of substances commonly occurs in residential settings. The procurement of substances involves certain routines and tactics for some addicts. For example;

"My meeting place, for instance, was at a bus stop. I would, get off at the stop, and the guy would be there too. He would sit next to me, hand over the substance, and then, as if his bus had arrived, he would get up and leave, and then I would get on the next one. (P7, user for 18 years)."

The location and method of substance transactions can vary depending on the quantity and type of the substance procured. The exchange of substances is carried out through different venues and methods, contingent upon the amount and nature of the substance being purchased. P8 articulates this situation as follows;

"When purchasing in bulk, it's generally at gas stations. For smaller amounts, it's done in the backstreets or quickly in a car. But for something like cocaine, it happens in residences and such places. Usually, cocaine dealers arrive in large cars. The buyer goes wherever the dealer calls them to, and the transaction is quickly done and over with."

Within the scope of the study, participants were asked about the types of risks and problems they encountered in procuring substances. Prominent issues identified include police intervention, the necessity to venture into dangerous neighborhoods, financial difficulties, and the challenge of finding suitable locations for use.

"The primary risk is usually the police. If the dealer realizes the police are around, they won't let you into the neighborhood. Or they'll tell you on the phone that it's risky and not to come. Then, as a second obstacle, not having a vehicle is a major hindrance for purchasing substances, for getting there (P2, user for 2 years)."

Another barrier and difficulty in accessing substances is identified as financial constraints. P6, highlighting the societal risks (such as theft, robbery, and signaling) that arise due to financial issues in procuring substances, equates the inability to access substances to the death of one's parents.

"The biggest obstacle is money. To get money, you've committed theft, engaged in robbery, I don't know, done signaling. What if you couldn't find the money somehow? Do you know what it means for an addict not to have money? It's like your parents have died (P6, user for 14 years)."

P2 has emphasized the various risks and consequences that substance use has brought to all aspects of their life, both financially and emotionally.

"Finding a place to use or money isn't the problem. But you get lost in society, you're alienated from it, you're not among people, and because you don't mix with others, you always remain on the fringes. Accordingly, you end up using in some secluded place."

Particularly, the continual consumption and procurement of substances and the need for financial resources to sustain this can deviate individuals from their moral values, leading them to engage in illegal activities such as theft and robbery.

"I committed theft. Things like holding, signaling. Some people beg for money, some deal drugs. Like, for example, they tell you to hold the stuff. Generally, when I ran out of money, I would steal. I would steal motorcycles. I would take apart high-end motorcycles. I've taken about 50 bikes and never got caught (P8, user for 7 years)."

It is understood that there is a transition from holding a bag to committing theft; initially, bag holding is sufficient, but subsequently, a need to resort to riskier methods like theft emerges. Furthermore, when experiencing a lack of financial

support, users tend to resort to more radical methods, believing that 'all means are justified' in procuring substances. P6 extensively explains the risks and social consequences arising from the process of substance use and procurement as follows:

"I started by robbing my own home. Stealing my own stuff. I sold my phones and such. When that wasn't enough, I learned to commit theft. I held a bag at first, bag holding was an easy thing. They call, come, and give. After that, I started to steal. Do you know what we would say among ourselves? To get the stuff, all means are justified. It's a necessity. If there's no source of money at home, you're forced to do it. Either go and signal for a few bucks, or go and steal, or deal drugs. There's no other way out."

The use and procurement of substances emerge as conditions that negatively impact individuals' lives in all aspects, leading them into a detrimental spiral. On the other hand, the reality that every user can potentially become a dealer highlights the potential for the spread of addiction and its associated societal risks.

Discussion and Conclusion

This research has meticulously examined the methods used by addicted individuals to procure substances, locations utilized for access, the risks encountered in this process, their communications with dealers, and the trust relationships involved. This study, distinct from others, delves into the specific dynamics of substance access processes, particularly the relationships established with dealers and the confidentiality strategies. It places a special emphasis on how these factors impact the daily lives, social relations, and risky outcomes of addicted individuals. This approach significantly contributes to the existing literature by providing a deeper understanding of substance addiction and procurement processes.

According to this research, the commencement of substance use typically occurs among teenagers aged 14-18, influenced by neighborhood culture, social environment, and peer relationships, starting with curiosity and the thought of trying just once, which then leads to addiction

particularly, the role of curiosity and the belief that trying once or underestimating substance use with the notion that 'it won't hurt' has been noted in many studies as a starting point for substance use (Bahar, 2018, p.9; Litman et al., 2005, p.579; Dingel et al., 2015). Additionally, it is emphasized in numerous studies that adolescents and young adults are excessively exposed to substance portrayals through digital media. These portrayals influence substance use, and consequently, substance misuse rates in society have been spreading due to this (Jackson, Janssen & Gabrielli, 2018; Scott et al., 2016, p.84). Lisdahl's (2013) study demonstrates that early-age substance use increases the risk of addiction and has adverse effects on cognitive functions. On the other hand, the need for belonging, acceptance, and gaining respect within neighborhood groups can influence substance use (Bozkurt, 2015, p.59). Lastly, the presence of substance users within the family can play a role in encouraging substance use among other family members, and family ties can be utilized in the procurement of substances. Research indicates that family relationships, particularly the quality of the father-son relationship, play a significant role in adolescents beginning to use substances (Rusby et al., 2018, p.312). Another study examining factors affecting adolescent substance use points to the influence of parenting style and intrafamily communication on substance use (Gresko et al., 2022, p.2). After evolving into addiction, it has been observed that the frequency of substance use increases, the type of substance changes, and an evolutionary process begins, leading to a complete transformation of the individual's life. In this process, the individual evolves from merely being a user of substances to taking on the role of a dealer.

The evaluations on substance procurement methods investigated in the study reveal that long-term users generally prefer traditional means. In contrast, the newer generation of users predominantly utilize media and technological tools in procuring substances. Individuals who access substances through traditional channels, such as street dealers, friends, acquaintances, family, and relatives, are predominantly long-term users. For the newer generation of users who have recently started using substances, social media

platforms, and online games have become significant mediums for procurement. This finding highlights the evolutionary change in substance use practices and emphasizes the critical role of technology and media in this process. Indeed, this shift in substance procurement channels results from the global paradigm shift in other forms of shopping. Customers have developed new purchasing models through social media platforms akin to digital marketing methods (Premnath & Nateson, 2021, p.3127; Alhamad et al., 2021).

The study identifies explicitly that social media platforms such as Telegram, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook, as well as certain games like PUBG Mobile and Minecraft, have been used as covert channels for substance procurement. In the study by Van der Sanden et al. (2021), it is noted that these platforms facilitate illegal drug transactions at the retail level, and among those who use social media for substance procurement, 48% utilize Facebook, 48% use Snapchat, and 20% use Instagram. The practice of substance transactions being conducted through social media applications like Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and Snapchat and the transformation of street-level drug dealers into virtual dealers have also been emphasized in other studies (Urbanik & Haggerty, 2018, p.1343; Bahar, 2018, pp.6-13). In another study, it has been stated that modern-day substance dealers have adopted social networking platforms like Instagram and TikTok as direct marketing tools for consumers. These platforms are used to upload short videos and images showcasing illegal products using code words and emojis to attract buyers. Furthermore, it is mentioned that transactions are often conducted through mobile payment applications such as Venmo and CashApp (Hu et al., 2021).

Additionally, another increasingly prevalent substance procurement channel worldwide is the crypto market. Crypto markets are online venues where drugs are purchased, protected by technology that allows for anonymous communication and employs currencies (e.g., Bitcoin) that are difficult to trace (Bachhuber & Merchant, 2017). In a study on online purchasing by Aldridge and others (2018), it is emphasized that considering people will continue to buy drugs,

crypto markets could offer numerous advantages over offline purchases regarding personal and public health.

According to this study, one of the common traditional methods used for procuring substances is through street dealers. It is observed that access to street dealers is typically facilitated by the person who initially introduces an individual to substance use, such as friends at school or in the workplace. According to other studies, street dealers often play a significant role in the substance procurement phase. Furthermore, these sellers, driven by the motive of making money through drug sales and thereby supplying substances to young people, increase the risks faced by youth and contribute to the proliferation of addiction (Degenhardt, 2010, p.95; Yaman, 2012, p.343).

Some participants have reported accessing substances through the help of close friends or family members. In the studies by Denton and O'Malley (1999), dealing or accessing substances through family members is emphasized as a typical situation. According to research by Rosenberg (1971), children of parents with antisocial personality disorders who use substances or alcohol can be more prone to substance use and dealing. According to the results of a study conducted in Türkiye, drug dealers got involved in this business due to the influence of friends (28%), to make easy money (19%), and to gain access to drugs (17%) (TUBİM, 2010). Additionally, it was found that substance addicts can procure drugs through peddlers who distribute on foot or through individuals working in different sectors, obtaining substances from various places such as barbershops, spicy meatball vendors, cafes, and coffee houses.

On the other hand, it has been observed how creative and determined substance addicts can be in obtaining the drugs they desire. Indeed, one of the most critical findings in the study was the method of attaching substances to pigeons' feet during the COVID-19 pandemic when curfews were in place. In a study conducted by Acar, Yaman, and Semerci (2022) during the COVID-19 pandemic on substance addiction, measures like social distancing, isolation, and quarantine were

reported as challenges faced by addicted individuals in accessing alcohol and substances.

Another sub-theme addressed in the study is the trust and communication established between the substance user and the dealer during the process of obtaining the substance. The dealer aims to gain more customers, while the buyer, influenced by their addiction, desires rapid access to the substance. Consequently, mutual need creates a compulsory and pragmatic trust relationship between the buyer and dealer. Kahya and Özerkmen (2007) also emphasized that establishing a trust relationship is a necessary step for forming connections with other drug dealers and customers.

During the process of procuring substances, the language and communication methods used by addicted individuals have been observed to form a subculture among those who use and procure substances. It has been emphasized that forming friendships becomes inevitable due to these individuals speaking the same language and sharing similar experiences in the addiction and procurement process. However, these friendships and their common language carry risks (Danışmaz Sevin & Erbay, 2021, p.73). The language used in substance transactions varies from street to street and city to city (Van Hout, 2010, p. 128). However, the most striking aspect of this jargon is using everyday words in a different context. For instance, ordinary words like 'bread,' 'meal,' 'sugar,' 'cheese,' 'item,' or 'tire,' as well as daily phrases like 'store is open,' 'new cars have arrived,' 'owe 100 lira', 'uncle Metin is here,' can become coded names varying according to the type of substance. In the study by Loupos et al. (2023), it was noted that users employ various emojis like pills and syringes or slang terms such as 'greens' and 'blues' to indicate different drugs. It was also mentioned that quantities of drugs like cocaine and marijuana are often disguised with coded terms like 'pizza' or 'cake.'

Furthermore, it has been found that the language and communication methods used by addicted individuals in the process of procuring substances involve various names and jargon specific to different substances; for instance, 'meal' for marijuana, 'wheel' or 'tire' for ecstasy, 'white' or 'cheese' for cocaine, 'rock' or 'Beşiktaş' for crack,

'uncle Metin' or 'ice' for methamphetamine, 'sister' for bonzai, 'Mother Mary' for marihuana. Similarly, Yaman's (2012, p.225) study highlights that a substance brotherhood relationship forms among young addicts, using terms like sugar, blue heart, yellow dolphin, Mitsubishi for substances like ecstasy.

On the other hand, it is observed that individuals with addiction use coded language to specify the quantity of substances during the procurement process, such as 'two cars,' 'two bags,' 'two apples,' or to communicate the location of purchase, they use phrases like 'need two tables from the furniture maker, going to make a cupboard.' All these communication methods are seen as a security measure for buyers and dealers. In a recent study by Loupos et al. (2023), it was emphasized that this coded language used in substance transactions is prevalent among the millennial generation and that deciphering the details of this language is crucial, as it provides a more detailed understanding of the social network structure and behaviors of those who deal substances through illegal channels. According to Bhaskar and Roketskiy (2021), despite the challenges in interactions between dealers and buyers, substance access can be facilitated through specific dynamics and channels due to the dealers' secrecy strategies. While substance addicts take risks to access drugs in various locations, their engagement in illegitimate activities and dangerous relationships leads to societal issues, creating a broad spectrum of impacts ranging from increased crime rates to the loss of the young population (Evren & Çakmak, 2002, p.189).

Among the most significant findings of the research are the locations used for substance procurement, the risks taken, and the ensuing social consequences. In this context, the places where substance transactions occur vary according to the region's characteristics; these locations can be as covert as someone's home, back alleys, abandoned buildings, and wooded areas, or as overt and public as bus stops, cafes, and gas stations. This situation illustrates that substance transactions can occur in hidden and public spaces. However, as Goffman (2014) noted, individuals involved in substance dealing often do not stay in one place for long due to the fear of being found by

police, other dealers, or family members, and they frequently change locations. Additionally, while special locations are preferred for bulk purchases, transactions involving small quantities are swiftly carried out in backstreets or cars, and for more luxurious substances, prestigious venues and large vehicles are typically used. For new-generation users, substance procurement locations can also include online websites. The study by Tofighi et al. (2016) underscores this emerging shift, highlighting how online websites like Craigslist are facilitating contemporary drug consumption.

Addicted individuals often engage in risky behaviors during the process of procuring substances, including illegal activities, theft, or forming relationships with dangerous individuals. Particularly, the continual need for substances and the financial resources required for their procurement can lead individuals to deviate from their moral values, pushing them towards illegal actions such as theft and robbery. Similarly, some studies have shown that addicts resort to crimes such as robbery, theft, murder, and prostitution to procure substances, and particularly among heroin and cocaine users, there is a significant relationship between substance use and committing crimes (Nurco, 1984; Nurco, 1998). Moreover, when experiencing a lack of financial support, users often resort to more radical methods, adopting the belief that 'all means are justified' for procuring substances. This situation sometimes results in the sale of inherited houses, household items, or the jewelry of a spouse or mother. It can even lead to the loss of employment, resulting in various socio-economic losses.

Overall, in the process of substance procurement, individuals have been observed to develop a network of strategies within their own context. The channels used for accessing substances range broadly from street dealers to technology and media networks, and the locations for procuring substances are found to be highly diverse. Particularly, modern-day substance dealers are using coded words, emojis, and short videos on social media and online gaming platforms to attract buyers. Therefore, understanding the role of technology and social media in substance procurement can provide a foundation for developing new strategies for

prevention and awareness of substance use among young people who use these platforms. A detailed analysis of how these platforms are used for substance procurement can provide educators and policymakers with the necessary tools to protect young people from such dangers.

In addiction treatment, it's crucial for experts to understand the social and cultural roots of substance use, particularly neighborhood culture, social environment, and friendships, and to develop treatment strategies that align with these factors. The impact of technology and social media, especially on substance acquisition among youth, should be considered, integrating approaches that adapt to these new changes into treatment processes. Experts should grasp the language and communication methods used by addicted individuals, understanding the jargon and symbols of this subculture, to facilitate more effective communication and deeper understanding during the treatment process.

Law enforcement agencies need to utilize advanced technology and data analysis to monitor illegal activities such as drug trafficking. These methods will enhance their ability to identify and intervene in extensive networks. Additionally, monitoring social media and digital communication channels plays a critical role in tracking and preventing drug trade. Law enforcement must also be familiar with new trends and technologies in substance access. The legal framework used in combating drugs should be adapted to current developments and new methods in drug trafficking.

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