

## The Causes, Risks, and Protective Factors of Addiction

Addiction is a disorder that influences lives of individuals physically, mentally, and socially. In this context, gaining awareness about the causes, risks, and protective factors of addiction is crucial. Acknowledging these aspects allows for a better comprehension of the individual being addicted and the process of his or her addiction, while simultaneously this may make addictive behaviors preventable. Early intervention and treatment programs can be developed more quickly and effectively. Understanding addiction on a personal level, addressing these factors comprehensively, holds great importance in the development of prevention and treatment plans. The development of addiction in individuals cannot be attributed to a single cause; rather, multiple factors play a role in this phenomenon.

### *Biological Factors:*

The genetic makeup of an individual may determine their susceptibility to developing addiction. There is no single gene responsible for addiction; rather, variations in multiple genes can lead to addictive behaviors. Biological predisposition to addiction is associated with the presence of a family history of addiction, especially among first-degree relatives. Additionally, changes in brain chemistry, such as the level of dopamine neurotransmitter regulating the brain's pleasure and reward mechanisms, may contribute to addiction.

### *Psychological Factors:*

Individuals struggling with psychological disorders such as depression, anxiety, or post-traumatic stress disorder may use addictive substances (drugs, alcohol) and misinterpret that these substances alleviate their symptoms. Personality traits such as impulsivity, difficulties in judgment, and low self-esteem can also make individuals more prone to addictive behaviors. Furthermore, the prolonged use of certain medications like benzodiazepines or painkillers without proper medical supervision can lead to addiction.

### *Social and Cultural Factors:*

The social environment where substance use is prevalent may trigger curiosity and a need for acceptance within the peer group, leading individuals to engage in addictive behaviors. Family history of addiction may influence individuals genetically but also socially. Observing the effects of substance use within the family can increase an individual's curiosity about substance use. In situations where there is no family history of addiction, ongoing distress in family and lack of parental support may be additional social causes of addiction. Adverse childhood experiences, such as emotional neglect, sexual abuse, domestic violence, and chronic stress, may heighten an individual's vulnerability to addiction.

Living in an environment that lacks economic and social opportunities, insufficient social control, increased crime rates, and growing alienation from society, as well as weakened ties to cultural values and institutions (family, school, government), may be the cultural factors that can contribute to development of addiction.

It is not expected that every individual within a specific group will develop the same type of addiction. Individual variations in risk and protective factors are influential in the onset of addiction. While risk factors may increase susceptibility to development of addictive behaviors, protective factors may enhance an individual's resilience against addiction.

### *Risk Factors:*

- Initiating substance use or engaging in addictive behaviors at an early age or during adolescence;
- Exposure to negative life events, encountering stress factors, or struggling to cope effectively with emotional difficulties;
- Lack of healthy bonds and limited social support;
- Easy access to addictive substances may increase the risk of addiction for individuals.

### *Protective Factors:*

- Establishing healthy bonds with one's environment, having a supportive family environment, and a social support network;
- Having effective coping strategies, problem-solving skills, and the ability of emotional regulation and stress management;
- Accessing education and resources related to addiction, making effective decisions to alter one's lifestyle;
- Seeking psychological help, undergoing therapy to enhance overall well-being may protect individuals against addiction.

Clinical Psychologist Laçin Kantarcı

### References

Butcher, J. N., Mineka, S., & Hooley, J. M. (2017). *Abnormal psychology*. Pearson Education India.

Cavaiola, A.A.(2009). Sociocultural models of addiction. G. Fisher, N.A. Roget (Eds), in: *Encyclopedia Of Substance Abuse Prevention, Treatment, & Recovery*. USA: Sage Publications.

Özbay, Y., Büyüköztürk, Ş., Tomar, İ. H., Eşici, H., Aliyev, R., Yancar, C., & Kurnaz, Z. (2019). Bağımlılıkla mücadelede koruyucu ve önleyici faktörlerin incelenmesi: yaşam becerilerinin rolü.

Tarhan N., & Nurmedov S. (2019). Bağımlılık sanal veya gerçek bağımlılıkla başa çıkma. Timaş Yayınları.