



## SUBSTANCE ABUSE AMONG ADOLESCENT COLLEGE GOING STUDENTS

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <b>Sayli S. Bhagat*</b>        | Assistant Professor, Department of Community Medicine, N.K.P. Salve Institute of medical Sciences & Research Centre & Lata Mangeshkar Hospital, Nagpur, India.<br>*Corresponding Author |
| <b>Sanjeev V. Chincholikar</b> | Professor & Head, Department of Community Medicine, MIMER Medical College, Talegaon Dabhade, Pune, Maharashtra, India.  |
| <b>Swati S. Raje</b>           | Assistant Professor, Department of Community Medicine, MIMER Medical College, Talegaon Dabhade, Pune, Maharashtra, India.   |

**ABSTRACT** **Introduction:** Adolescence is a transitional stage of physical and mental human development with substantial risk for initiating substance use. Aim: To assess the knowledge, attitude and practices of adolescent college going students towards substance abuse.

**Objectives:** 1. To estimate the prevalence of substance abuse. 2. To identify the associated risk factors.

**Material and Methods:** A cross-sectional study was carried out in schools and junior colleges in the rural area of Maharashtra. A structured questionnaire was used to assess the socio-demographic variables.

**Results:** Prevalence of substance abuse among boys was 7.3% and nil among girls. Most commonly abused substances were areca nut followed by gutkha, tobacco and alcohol. The reasons for abuse were peer pressure, loneliness, sadness and curiosity. 88% of the students stated that they know the harmful effects of substance abuse, however only 46% of them could enlist those. 18% of girls and 32% of boys mentioned involvement of their family members in substance abuse.

**Conclusion:** Though peer pressure was the main reason for substance abuse, loneliness and sadness also count for abusive behaviour and needs to be addressed. Understanding the causes of substance abuse can help to promote healthier adulthood.

**KEYWORDS :** Attitude and practices, substance abuse, peer pressure, knowledge, loneliness

## INTRODUCTION

Substance abuse is the use of a drug or other substance for a non-medical use with the aim of producing some type of mind altering effect in the user.<sup>1,2</sup> Psychoactive substance use poses a threat to the health as well as social and economic fabric of families, communities and nations.<sup>3</sup> Drug dependence is a growing problem, consequences of drug dependence cost the community heavily and they form a major health problem. This habit not only affects health, education and occupational career but also it incurs a huge financial and social burden on the society.<sup>4</sup> Adolescence is the period between 10 and 19 years of age.<sup>5</sup> Adolescents are cognitively immature and vulnerable to social influences. Experimentation with addictive substances often begins in this age.<sup>5</sup> In a milieu where social and peer pressures are difficult to resist, adolescents often fall prey to addictions. Smoking, alcoholism, and drug use among adolescents are social evils which are on alarming rise globally.<sup>6</sup> WHO estimates that globally 25%–90% of children and adolescents indulge in substance abuse.<sup>5</sup> Schools and colleges are the places where the adolescents explore different health risk behaviours when they are involved with peer groups and are out of control from parents.<sup>6</sup> Clearly, this is a crucial time to find out the magnitude of such risky behaviours which is essential for planning suitable interventions and translate it into everlasting good health for adolescents. Epidemiological surveys which were carried out in the past three decades to assess the prevalence of alcohol and drug use in general population in India have revealed that 20%–40% of participants who were above 15 years were current users of alcohol and that 10% of them were regular or excessive users.<sup>7</sup> In the past few years, many surveys were conducted on school going students about the substance abuse. However, there are a few studies on the substance use pattern among the college going students with different academic and familial backgrounds.<sup>8</sup>

## AIM AND OBJECTIVES:

**Aim** - To assess the knowledge, attitude and practices of adolescent college-going students towards substance abuse.

## OBJECTIVES:

1. To estimate the prevalence of substance abuse
2. To identify the associated risk factors.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS:

It is a cross-sectional study carried out among the college students in Talegaon Dabhade, Pune, India. As there were no government colleges providing teaching up to 12th standard or above, only private colleges

were represented in the data. Thus, reference population consisted of three colleges. Out of them, one college was selected by simple random sampling. Adolescent boys and girls in 11th and 12th standard were selected as study population. All the students present at the time of study were included in the study. Study sample consisted of 150 boys and 203 girls. Data were collected from the students using a pre-structured proforma. Written consent was obtained from the students and they were asked to fill the questionnaires with an open mind. Reasons for the study were explained. The study design was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee.

## RESULTS:

Study sample consisted of 150 (43%) boys and 203 (57%) girls. It can be observed from Figure 1 that prevalence of substance abuse among male participants was 7.3%. None of the girls was using any of the substances.

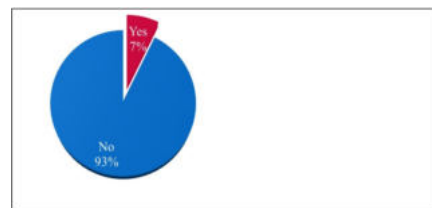


Figure 1: Prevalence of substance abuse among male participants

Figure 2 revealed that 32% (49) of male participants reported the involvement of their family members in substance abuse whereas 12% (19) revealed the involvement of their friends in the substance abuse. Nearly 18% of the girls and 32% of the boys mentioned the involvement of their family members in substance abuse.

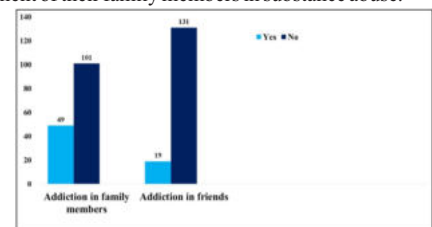
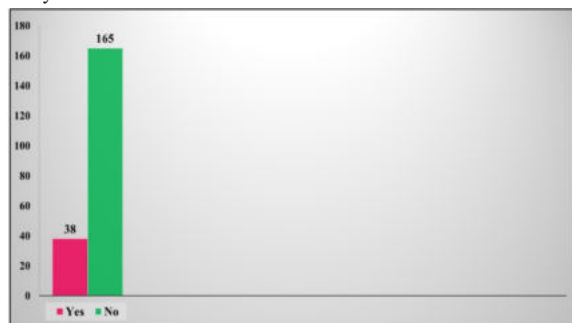


Figure 2: Involvement of family members and friends in substance abuse

As shown in Figure 3, 18% of girls reported the involvement of their family members in substance abuse.



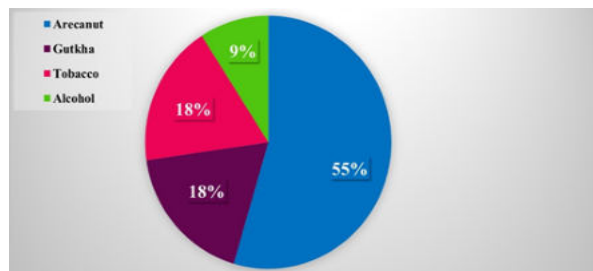
**Figure 3: Addiction in family members of female participants**

It can be found out from Table 1 that peer pressure was the main reason for substance abuse while other reasons were loneliness, depression (18%), and curiosity (9%).

**Table 1: Reasons for abuse**

| Responses of participants | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| Peer pressure             | 45.45%         |
| Loneliness, sadness       | 18.18%         |
| Out of curiosity          | 9.09%          |

As seen in Figure 4, most commonly abused substances were areca nut (55%), followed by gutkha, tobacco (18% each), and alcohol (9%).



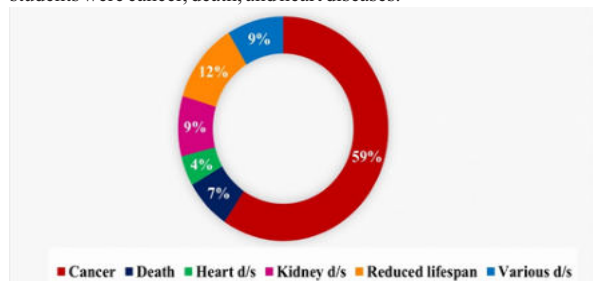
**Figure 4: Most common substances used by the male participants**

As revealed in Table 2, 88% of the students were aware of the addictive substances and their harmful effects; however, only 46% of them could enlist them.

**Table 2 : Knowledge about addictive substances and their harmful effects**

| Present (%) | Absent (%) |
|-------------|------------|
| 88%         | 12%        |

Figure 5 revealed that most common harmful effects mentioned by students were cancer, death, and heart diseases.



**Figure 5: Most common harmful effects mentioned by the participants**

**DISCUSSION**

As mentioned in results, prevalence of substance abuse among male participants was 7.3%. Geethadevi *et al.*<sup>6</sup> (Kerala) reported that 18% of study participants were involved in one or more risk behaviors related to substance use, significantly more in males than females. In our study, it was observed that female population was not involved in substance abuse. Similar observations were reported by Goswami (Guwahati).<sup>2</sup> This might be because being a rural area, males are more exposed to outside environment than females. Nebhinani *et al.*<sup>5</sup> in their study observed the involvement of family members and friends in

substance abuse. Similar results are observed in our study. It can be observed from Table 1 that reasons for substance abuse were peer pressure, loneliness, sadness and curiosity. Goswami<sup>2</sup> in her study also revealed similar findings.

In a study by Nebhinani *et al.*,<sup>5</sup> 91% of study participants were aware of addictive substances and their harmful effects such as liver damage, oral and throat cancer, and HIV. In our study also, more than half of students mentioned cancer as the most common harmful effect.

**CONCLUSION:**

1. There was a higher prevalence of substance abuse among the male participants.
2. It was observed that peer pressure, loneliness, sadness and curiosity play a major role for the abusive behaviour.
3. Family environment has an important role in shaping up one's personality. Addiction in the family members is a crucial factor for abusive behaviour of the child.

**Recommendations:**

1. There is a need for establishing counseling and preventive mental health services as an integral part of the college curriculum to address the problem of substance abuse.
2. To reduce the burden of competitive examination; recreation and entertainment activities may be started in the college itself.
3. Intense information, education and communication activities should be carried out on a large scale to reduce the problem of substance abuse.
4. These activities can act as a buffer to release the stress and boost the confidence of college students.

**Limitations:**

1. Being an institutionalized study, the findings cannot be generalized.
2. Community-based studies need to be carried out to strengthen our findings.

**Financial support and sponsorship:**

Nil

**Conflicts of interest:**

None

**REFERENCES**

1. World Health Organization. Guide to drug Use Epidemiology. Available from: <http://www.who.int/hq/2000/a58352 Part A.pdf>.
2. Himakshi goswami; substance abuse among youths at guwahati city, Assam (India): major instigator and socio-demographic factors; international education and research journal; vol 1; issue 4; Nov 2015
3. Swadi H. Drug abuse in children and adolescents: An update. Arch Dis Child 1992;67:1245-6.
4. Sorab Gupta, Sandeep Singh Sarpal, Dinesh Kumar, Tarundeep Kaur, Sumant Arora. Prevalence, pattern and familial effects of substance use among the male college students-a North Indian study. Journal of Clinical and Diagnostic Research : Jcdr, 31 Jul 2013, 7(8):1632-1636
5. Naresh Nebhinani, Mamta Nebhinani, Arun Kumar Misra, Seema Grewal; Substance-Related Knowledge and Attitude In School and College Students; German journal of psychiatry; 16(1): 15-19; 2013
6. Geethadevi M, Elsheba Mathew, Manjula V. D, Sobha A, Anita Bhaskar, Bindu Vasudevan, Ajith R; prevalence and determinants of tobacco, alcohol and drug use among adolescent high school students in an urban area of Kottayam district, Kerala; journal of evolution of medical and dental sciences; vol 3; issue 36; august 2014
7. Ram Ghulam, Kamal Verma, Pankaj Sharma, Monica Razdan, Rahul Anand Razdan; Drug abuse in slum population; Indian J Psychiatry 2016 Jan-Mar; 58(1): 83-86.
8. Chavan BS, Arun P, Bhargava R, Singh GP. Prevalence of alcohol and drug dependence in rural and slum population of Chandigarh: A community survey. Indian J Psychiatry; 2007 Jan-Mar; 49(1): 44-48.
9. Varma VK, Singh A, Singh S, Malhotra AK. Extent and pattern of alcohol use in North India. Indian J Psychiatry 1980;22:331-7.
10. Saxena V, Saxena Y, Kishore G, Kumar P. A study on substance abuse among school going male adolescents of Doiwala block, district Dehradun. Indian J Public Health 2010;54:197-200.