



AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF DRUG ADDICTION AND PREVENTIVE STRATEGIES.

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ABSTRACT Drug addiction among youth has become a major social and public health concern because it affects physical health, mental wellbeing, education, family relationships, and social stability. The present study is conducted to identify the reasons that lead youth towards drug addiction and to suggest practical measures for prevention. The study is based on a questionnaire survey among youth in Belagavi district, using a structured approach to collect responses on the causes of drug use, peer influence, preventive attitudes, and community-based solutions. The findings show that drug use among youth is not driven by one single factor, but by a combination of emotional, social, and environmental influences. The most important reasons reported were influence of friends and social circles, coping with stress, anxiety or emotional problems, curiosity or desire to experiment, and escape from personal or family-related issues. Peer pressure emerged as one of the strongest causes, showing that youth are highly vulnerable to group influence during adolescence and early adulthood. The study also found that prevention cannot rely only on punishment or awareness in isolation. Respondents strongly supported measures such as awareness and educational programs, peer support and mentorship, easy access to counselling and rehabilitation services, stricter law enforcement, family and community support, and engagement in sports, arts, and productive activities. These responses indicate that youth themselves recognize the need for a multidimensional prevention strategy. In addition, barriers such as stigma, fear of legal consequences, lack of information, financial difficulties, and poor availability of treatment services weaken recovery efforts. The overall findings suggest that drug addiction prevention should begin early, especially in schools, colleges, and community settings, and should combine education, counselling, family involvement, peer leadership, and accessible rehabilitation services. The study concludes that a coordinated public health, educational, and social response is essential to reduce youth drug addiction and support healthier life choices.

KEYWORDS : Addiction, Substance abuse, psychological stress etc.

INTRODUCTION

Substance abuse among young people has become a major social, psychological, and public health concern in modern society. The increasing exposure of young people to narcotic substances, changing lifestyles, peer influence, emotional stress, and easy accessibility of drugs have contributed significantly to the rise of substance abuse across both urban and semi-urban communities. Young individuals are particularly vulnerable during adolescence and early adulthood, as this stage of life involves emotional instability, identity formation, social pressure, and experimentation. In many cases, what begins as curiosity or social influence gradually develops into dependency and long-term addiction.

India possesses one of the world's largest youth populations, making the issue of drug abuse a matter of national concern. The misuse of substances not only damages physical and mental health but also affects education, employment opportunities, family relationships, and social stability. In recent years, educational institutions, hostels, and urban social spaces have increasingly become environments where exposure to intoxicants is more common. The growing normalization of substance use through media, films, and online culture has further intensified the problem by influencing youth behaviour and attitudes toward drugs.

Belagavi district, located in Karnataka, represents a socially and economically dynamic region with a large youth population, educational institutions, and expanding urban influence. Due to migration of students, unemployment-related stress, peer interactions, and evolving social trends, the district has witnessed increasing concern regarding drug consumption among young people. Substance abuse in the region is not limited to one particular class or group; instead, it cuts across educational, social, and economic backgrounds. The issue has also created indirect impacts such as behavioural problems, academic decline, family conflicts, mental health disorders, and criminal activities.

Drug addiction is influenced by multiple interconnected factors

including peer pressure, emotional distress, family environment, curiosity, social isolation, and economic hardship. Many youths turn toward substances as a coping mechanism for stress, anxiety, depression, or personal struggles. At the same time, easy availability of drugs and lack of awareness regarding their harmful consequences increase the risk of addiction. The growing involvement of illegal supply networks and substance-related crimes has further complicated the situation, making it both a social and criminological concern.

The present study aims to examine the causes, patterns, and perceptions of drug addiction among youth in Belagavi district. It seeks to understand the major reasons behind substance use, evaluate awareness regarding its harmful effects, and identify possible preventive measures suggested by young people themselves. The study also emphasizes the importance of rehabilitation, counselling, family support, educational awareness, and community participation in reducing substance abuse among youth.

Understanding youth drug addiction is essential not only for public health but also for social development and crime prevention. Effective intervention requires coordinated efforts from educational institutions, families, law enforcement agencies, healthcare professionals, and community organizations. By identifying the major contributing factors and analysing local realities, this study attempts to contribute meaningful insights that may support better policies, awareness programs, and rehabilitation strategies for protecting young people from the harmful effects of drug addiction.

Drugs And Crime Relationship

Drug abuse and criminal activities are closely connected in many societies, particularly among vulnerable youth populations. Individuals affected by substance dependence may become involved in unlawful activities such as theft, violence, illegal transportation of drugs, and antisocial behaviour either to sustain their addiction or under the influence of intoxicating substances. Drug trafficking networks also contribute to organized crime, social unrest, and public insecurity. In India, the growing availability of narcotic and

psychotropic substances has increased concerns regarding youth involvement in criminal behaviour. Although legal frameworks such as the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act aim to control drug-related offences, enforcement alone has not been sufficient to eliminate the problem. Experts increasingly emphasize the importance of rehabilitation, counselling, awareness programs, and community participation in reducing both addiction and crime. Therefore, addressing drug abuse is not only a health priority but also a significant issue for social order and criminal justice administration.

Reasons For Drug Addiction

Drug addiction develops through a combination of psychological, social, environmental, and personal factors. Young people are especially vulnerable because adolescence and early adulthood involve emotional changes, social pressures, and curiosity-driven behaviour. Factors such as peer influence, academic stress, family conflicts, loneliness, unemployment, and lack of emotional support often encourage experimentation with intoxicating substances. In some cases, individuals use drugs as a temporary escape from anxiety, depression, frustration, or traumatic experiences. Easy access to drugs, media influence, and changing social lifestyles have also increased the risk of substance use among youth. Additionally, repeated exposure to addictive substances gradually creates physical and psychological dependency, making withdrawal difficult. The problem is further intensified in communities facing economic instability and weak awareness regarding the harmful consequences of drug abuse.

Effects Of Drug Addiction

Drug addiction affects individuals physically, mentally, socially, and emotionally. Psychoactive substances alter normal brain functioning and can lead to dependency over time. Different categories of drugs produce varying effects on the body and mind. Some substances depress brain activity and reduce alertness, while others stimulate the nervous system and create temporary feelings of energy or excitement. Certain drugs distort perception and behaviour, leading to hallucinations and impaired judgement.

Long-term substance abuse can result in severe health complications including heart disease, liver damage, respiratory disorders, weakened immunity, and neurological problems. Drug users are also at higher risk of infections such as HIV and Hepatitis due to unsafe practices like needle sharing. Psychological effects commonly include anxiety, depression, aggression, mood instability, and poor decision-making abilities. Addiction also negatively influences education, employment, family relationships, and social reputation. Many individuals experience isolation, financial difficulties, legal problems, and reduced quality of life because of continued drug dependence. Since addiction affects multiple aspects of human life, effective treatment requires medical care, psychological counselling, rehabilitation support, and social reintegration programs.

METHODOLOGY

Aim of the Study:

The primary aim centres on uncovering the root causes of drug addiction specifically among youth aged 15-30 in Belagavi District, while proposing actionable prevention strategies tailored to the area's unique social and environmental context. This involves a focused quantitative survey to map patterns like peer influence, stress triggers, and accessibility, filling gaps in prior studies that overlooked detailed local drug types, hotspots and personal reasons for drug consumption.

Significance of the Study:

By generating evidence-based insights from 100 local youth responses, the study equips policymakers, educators, health officials, and communities with targeted tools to curb substance abuse, easing burdens on families, law enforcement, and public health systems. It highlights Belagavi's vulnerabilities—like student hostels and unemployment stress—enabling multidimensional interventions that blend education, peer support, and enforcement, ultimately fostering safer youth development and reducing crime links.

Universe of the Study:

The study universe encompasses youths aged 15–30 years residing in Belagavi District, including all localities, educational institutions, and communities within the district boundaries.

Objectives of the Research:

1. To find out the reasons for drug addiction in Belagavi District.

2. To suggest measures for prevention of drug addiction.

Sampling Method:

Simple random sampling will be used to ensure each individual in the population has an equal probability of selection. This helps in Minimizing the bias, Strengthen and enhance the representativeness of findings.

Sample Size:

For this study, a total of 100 completed responses are collected through a structured online questionnaire administered via Google Forms.

Methods of Data Collection:

Data is collected using a structured Google Form questionnaire. Participants were invited to respond online, with questions covering demographics, drug use patterns, frequency, locations, causes, and prevention opinions.

Research Type:

This is a quantitative cross-sectional survey. Data gathered at one point in time across the target population to describe current patterns and associated variables.

Data Analysis Techniques:

Data will be summarized using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages), with cross-tabulation to explore associations between variables (e.g., demographic factors and drug use). Thematic coding will be applied to responses on causes and prevention. Geographic data may be mapped to identify hotspots with high prevalence.

Major Findings

- **Peer pressure is huge:** 57.4% (31 out of 54) said yes, they've felt pushed by friends to try drugs. It's the top trigger, 36.9% (24 out of 65 users) selected friends or social circles as their main reason for starting.
- **Stress and emotions:** 27.7% (18 out of 65) started to cope with anxiety, stress, or emotional issues. Curiosity got 21.5% (14 out of 65). Smaller shares said fun (7.7%) or family problems (4.6%).
- **Treatment gap:** Only 34.8% (8 out of 23 users) ever went to a de-addiction centre. Most (65.2%) haven't. Youth rate local rehab as just okay or worse: 7.4% very effective, 28.3% somewhat effective, another 28.3% neutral, 26.8% not very, and 8.9% not at all (from 67 responses).
- **Big barriers to help:** In a multiple-answer question (155 total picks from 67 people), top issues were lack of information (20.6%), fear of police/legal trouble (18.7%), few local centres (18.1%), money problems (16.8%), and stigma (14.2%).
- **Non-users stay away for good reasons:** From 54 non-users, personal choice (34.3%), health fears (27.1%), religion (18.6%), and family influence (14.3%) kept them off drugs. 65.4% see drug abuse as extremely or very serious locally.
- **Other patterns:** Drugs are easily accessible in many areas; Users often get them from friends or dealers. The consumption spots include homes, parties and streets.
- Overall, there is no single cause but it's friends, stress and easy access to drugs, mixing together to be the main causes of youth drug addiction in Belagavi.

CONCLUSION

Youth drug addiction in Belagavi stems from interconnected triggers rather than isolated causes, with peer influence topping the list at nearly 37% of users citing friends or social circles as their entry point, followed closely by stress, anxiety, or emotional coping at 28%. Curiosity fuels about 22% of initiations, underscoring how experimentation quickly escalates without intervention.

The study stresses that effective prevention demands a collaborative, multi-layered strategy—blending school-based awareness (19% endorsement), peer mentorship programs (19%), accessible counselling (18%), stricter enforcement (17%), family support (14%), and youth activities like sports or arts (12%)—to address both demand and supply sides while building resilience early in schools and communities.

Overall, respondents recognize the crisis as "very serious" or worse (65%), viewing it as a public health issue solvable through coordinated action from health departments, police, families, and educators to

foster healthier choices and reduce relapse.

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