

Prevalence of Substance Abuse Among Tribal School Adolescents In Manipur



social science

KEYWORDS : Substance abuse, experimenting, adolescents, age of initiation

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ABSTRACT

Substance abuse in Manipur among adolescents is soaring and is higher than the average prevalence rate in India. Due to its geographical proximity to the international drug trafficking routes, certain practices and social condition makes adolescents more vulnerable to addiction. In addition, Adolescents due to its rapid growth and development, their sensation seeking habits, experimented new and risky things and lands themselves to detrimental health, unstable social life and failure in their academics. The study which was carried out in a school in Manipur shows that prevalence rate among male adolescents is alarmingly high and they used it out of curiosity and for fun with friends. The adolescents began to experiment it as early as 6 to 7 years of age and a large number of them began experimenting across the adolescent span. The easy availability in their area makes them more vulnerable too.

Introduction: Adolescents experience rapid physical emotion and mental growth. They are curious and began to experiment with new and even risky situation like substance abuse. As part of the experiments with such addictive substances, most of them knowingly or unknowingly began to enjoy it and gradually form a habit and slowly leads to addiction. Though all adolescents, who experiment substances as part of their growing merely for fun and out of curiosity does not develop into a habit and addiction, yet many adolescents having many risk factor develops as victim. Adolescents start experimenting with gateway drugs tobacco and alcohol. They began to crave for more drugs to experience the same effect; thereby to reach the initial level of intoxication, added potent drugs were required as the same amount wears down and couldn't achieved the desired intoxication and the desired effect. Thus experimentation and fun leads to a life threatening situation and leads to several social disabilities and even death. Research indicates that if adolescents are surrounded by many such risk factors, it makes them more vulnerable to be substance users. Certain risk factors are low commitment to school (poor grades, absenteeism, and not participating in extra-curricular activities), impulsive personality, and dysfunctional family, less social cohesion in the neighbourhood or the society one lives in. The community which accepts such behaviour or are tolerant to such practices contributes to making young people vulnerable to addictive habits.

Relevance: According to the latest government reports and research findings, Manipur is found to have the highest rate of substance abuse, like alcohol, Intravenous Drug Users and tobacco products. Though the state is dry state, yet the inflow of Indian Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) is huge. In addition, tobacco products of different types were openly sold in almost all grocery stores and its mostly young people who were regular customers. The proximity to drug trafficking routes also contribute to this. Young people become victim of these addictive substances and bring miseries in their life, their family and society. They neglect their studies, drop-out of schools, demand more money to supply their constant crave and creates nuisance in the family. Thus, this study will assess the prevalence rate of such addictive substances, the reasons of their indulgence and the pattern of usage. It will bring better picture on the substance abuse behaviour and practice of tribal adolescents in Manipur.

Method and Procedure: The study is a descriptive research which aims at describing and analysing the prevalence of substance abuse among school adolescents in the age-group of 14-17 years of age. Data were collected using survey method where

all the students (Class X, XI and XII) who were present in the class were administered a questionnaire. Prior permission from the school authorities was taken. The students were instructed, doubts clarified and it took around 30 minutes to fill up the questionnaire. The researcher went to each classroom and collected the data.

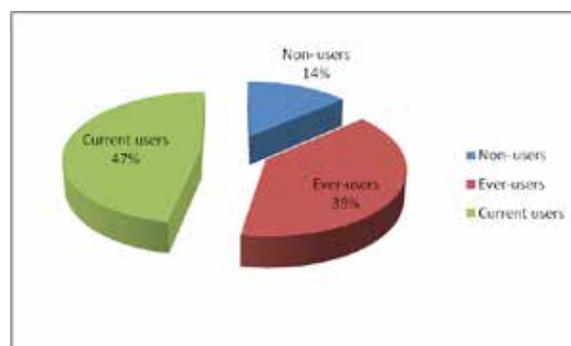
Results and discussions:

Table 1 – Distribution of respondents

Distributions of respondents		
Male Adolescents	Female Adolescents	Total
49	68	117
41.88%	58.12%	100%

Table no.1 above shows the distribution of respondents based on gender. The female respondents were more than half of the total respondents i.e. 58.12% and male adolescents consists of 41.88% of the total respondents. They were all in the age group of 14-17 years of age belonging to Class X, Class XI and Class XII. The parents of those adolescents were mostly cultivators and a few working in the public sector and private sector as well. Majority of them has medium to large families of members ranging from 4 to 10 or 12 members as well.

Figure 1: Prevalence rate of substance abuse among male adolescents



The figure above (figure.1) indicates the prevalence rate of substance abuse among male adolescents. In this study all female adolescents' respondents reported complete abstinence from substance abuse. Therefore, the prevalence rates of male adolescents were represented.

Data illustrate the prevalence rate of substance abuse among adolescents in which nearly half i.e. 47% (n= 24) of the male adolescents are current users. Further, 39% (n= 20) of the adolescents were ever users i.e. they have experimented and tried out yet they stop the use of substances and only 14% (n=7) of the male adolescents were non-users. This few adolescent completely abstain themselves from all addictive substances. A large number of male adolescents are indulging into this risky behaviour and are prone to addiction.

Table 2- Reasons of their habits

Reasons of their habits		
Reasons for abstinence	Reasons for quitting	Reasons for continued use
Harmful for health Don't like it Parents not allowed	Don't like it Parents advice Affect my life Affect my studies Better person in life Don't want to show bad example to others	Addiction Uneasiness
*Response of the female adolescents is also included. N.B: All female respondents were non-users		

The above Table No. 2 provides us detailed information on the reasons behind their various health habits. Since none of the female respondents reported the use of substances thus their responses are reflected in the first section of this table alone. The reasons for complete abstinence are that many considered such things harmful to their health and they dislike taking such addictive substances and a few says that due to the strict parental control they decline to use.

Upon asking the ever users or the experimenters on the motive of quitting, they give several reason where most of them said they don't like it after the first taste, and because of their parents advice and the realisation that it affects their health and well-being, affects their studies etc. Some of them reported that they discontinued the use since they want to become a better person and want to show good examples to others.

When asked the current users for their continued use of substances, they said that they couldn't stop their habits due to addiction and the uneasiness they felt when they attempt to quit. Many refuses to respond on this as well.

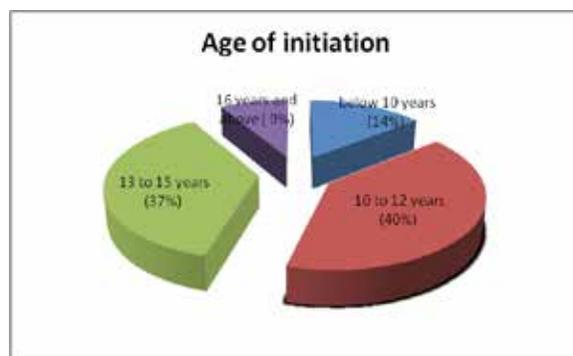
Table 3- Reasons for first use

Reason for use					Total ever users and current users
Curiosity/ Experimentation	Party or fun	Peer pressure	Tension	Free of cost	
27 (61.36%)	16 (36.36%)	10 (27.73%)	7 (15.91%)	2 (4.55%)	N= 44

When the adolescents were asked about the reasons of their use, they provide multiple responses and the table No.3 clearly shows that 61.36% of the adolescents began to use merely out of curiosity and to experiment taste and feel the effect it could bring. Researchers like Jaffe, 1998; Rice, 1992; Visser & Routledge, 2007 also says that large number of adolescents experiment with legal and illegal substances out of curiosity. The study that 36.36% of them use it for fun and for party similar to the findings of Baum & Smith, 2004; Berk, 2007 also shows that adolescents take substances as a reflection of sensation seeking at this period. It

is not only during traditional festivals, other religious festivals, there are often frequent parties like; friends get together, lunch parties, dinner parties even during weekdays and weekend parties. They often play games or indulge in any activity and at the end, they end up partying. During such parties they indulge into various intoxicating drinks and diets. Further, other reasons were that after their class or during class lunch break, students take advantage of free time and have fun with friends accompanied by cigarette, or other tobacco products or even alcoholic drinks. Of the majority, 27.73% of the adolescents use it due to peer pressure, to be in the group, to have a we-feeling, similar to what Conger, 1991; Liddle & Rowe, 2006; Rice, 1992; Rice & Dolgin, 2008 found that experimenting with substances to be like their friends or be part of a social group. A few of them uses it due to tension, while some of them uses it since it is free of-cost; being provided by friends or others. 'Easy availability' and 'relief from tension' were the most frequent reasons for continuation of substance use (Tsering, 2010).

Figure 2- Age of first use



It is understood for the figure 2 above that irrespective of the age group a large percentage of adolescents began to use substances across adolescent's life span. It is reported that few adolescents began to experiment it as early as 6 and 7 years of age. It is available in their home especially home brewed alcohol and they began to drink such addictive drinks as well. Nearly half (40%) of the male adolescents began to use substances at the age of 10 to 12 years of age. Around 37% of the male adolescents began to use it between the age of 13 to 1 years of age and only 9% of the male adolescents began it after 16 years. Thus, a few adolescent initiate such habits before reaching adolescents and majority of them began experimenting in their early and mid adolescence. Data from around the world suggest that substance abuse starts between the ages of 11 and 14

Figure 3- Types of substance use

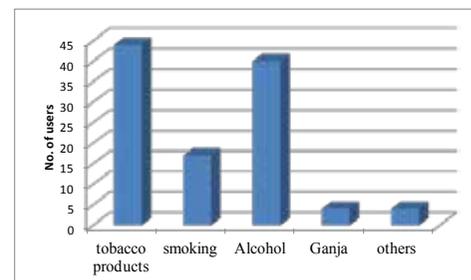


Figure 3 shows that tobacco and tobacco products and alcohol is one which is extensively being abused by adolescents. The price of substances such as alcohol, cigarettes and cannabis is less. As a result, adolescents abuse these substances because they are available and affordable (Kawaguchi, 2004; Liddle & Rowe, 2006). Tobacco products of different labels like ghutkha,

dilbagh, talab, chewing of betel nuts which have different flavours and potency were widely used by them. Often such pan masalas were considered as a mouth freshener and are often consumed by adolescents. They also feel cool and in-fashion to chew paan (betel nut) and roam across the streets. It is noticed that smoking is less as it is considered else bold for young adolescents and they smoke in secret places and hence they indulge in it much lesser than alcohol and other tobacco products. Ganja though available in some homes is found less used among adolescents. Other drugs such as sniffing nail polish or dendrite and paints were also found very less and no report on the use of hard core drugs like opium, cocaine or other drugs like SP, proxymovyon etc.

The sources of such types are mostly from shops, secondly in secret place, friends place, and hotel and even in their own home. It is understood here that though, the state Manipur is a dry state and all alcoholic drinks are banned especially in the community or the village settings, the women bodies take active role to curb and prevent the sale of drinks; on the contrary, the sale of all tobacco and tobacco products like ghutkah, dilbagh, paan, talab are available in all shops. People of any age can easily buy and use it. Thus, due to its availability and cheap price, it is the most widely form of substance abuse used among adolescents. The easy availability and low prices of substances have greatly contributed to adolescent use (Jaffe, 1998; Kawaguchi, 2004). Alcohol products are also available for sale in the black markets sold by few families in the village. Few adolescents also get such products from their friends home, in the hotel and even in their own home.

Conclusion:

It is now a clear picture that addictive substances are widely used among adolescents especially male and huge effort should be made to contain such instances. If these adolescents are not helped, a large number of drop-outs, family instability and societal problems would soar up. The number of addicts increased and the society may end up with young addicts who contribute nothing to the society because they are dependent to substances. Thus, policy reform on investing more on prevention programme rather than on rehabilitation should follow.

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