



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Public Administration

DRUG PREVENTION BY THE GOVERNMENT: A PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION PERSPECTIVE

KEY WORDS: Drug Prevention, Governance, NDPS Act, Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan, Public Administration, Policy Implementation

Dr Rajvinder Kaur

Assistant Professor, Department of Public Administration, Punjabi University, Patiala

ABSTRACT

Drug abuse has emerged as a pressing policy concern, affecting not only the health sector but also law enforcement, economic productivity, and community well-being. In India, the rising prevalence of drug use among youth has made prevention a priority for governance. This article critically examines the role of government in drug prevention, with special attention to legislation, program design, and administrative mechanisms. Drawing on qualitative analysis of national policies, official reports, and scholarly studies, the paper explores how public administration influences the effectiveness of preventive strategies. The findings suggest that while India has introduced a range of legislative and programmatic measures—including the NDPS Act, the National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction, and the Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan—implementation deficits, fragmented institutional responsibilities, and inadequate rehabilitation structures limit their success. The paper argues for a more integrated, evidence-based, and participatory model of governance, positioning drug prevention as both a public health and administrative imperative.

INTRODUCTION

The problem of drug abuse transcends individual behavior, creating ripple effects on public safety, health systems, and socio-economic stability. Governments worldwide face the dual challenge of restricting supply chains while reducing demand for narcotic substances. The Indian case is particularly significant: surveys have shown a growing incidence of substance dependence, especially among young populations, which places pressure on state institutions.

In the domain of public administration, drug prevention represents a test of the state's capacity to design effective policies, coordinate across sectors, and engage communities. Prevention cannot be treated merely as a criminal justice issue; it requires holistic governance that blends legislation, education, rehabilitation, and international cooperation. This study evaluates India's governmental efforts to prevent drug abuse, focusing on how institutional mechanisms and administrative processes shape outcomes.

Literature Review

Research on drug prevention often emphasizes medical or psychological dimensions, but administrative perspectives provide valuable insights into how state capacity determines success. Scholars such as Sharma (2018) argue that punitive legislation alone cannot deter drug dependence without parallel investments in social welfare. Gupta and Kumar (2021) highlight community-based approaches as complementary to state interventions. Internationally, studies of Portugal's decriminalization (Hughes & Stevens, 2010) show how policy innovation can shift focus from punishment to prevention and rehabilitation.

Despite these contributions, there is limited research that systematically evaluates Indian government programs from a governance lens. This gap underscores the need to analyze drug prevention as an administrative challenge, not just a health or security problem.

Methodology

This article employs a qualitative research design based on secondary sources. Data were collected from government reports (Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Narcotics Control Bureau), legal documents (NDPS Act and amendments), and international agency publications (UNODC). Peer-reviewed articles were also reviewed to identify global best practices. The analysis applies a governance framework, focusing on:

1. Policy formulation – how strategies are designed and aligned with national objectives.

2. Institutional mechanisms – the roles of ministries, agencies, and intergovernmental structures.
 3. Implementation – the extent to which programs achieve coverage and effectiveness.
 4. Community engagement – the participation of civil society and citizens in prevention.

Government Initiatives

Legislative Measures

The NDPS Act, 1985 remains the cornerstone of India's anti-drug framework. While it provides strong penalties for trafficking and possession, it has been criticized for being overly punitive toward users. Amendments in 2014 sought to balance enforcement with treatment, but practical implementation remains uneven.

Programmatic Interventions

The National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (2018–2025) emphasizes awareness, treatment facilities, and capacity building. The Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan (2020) expanded outreach, targeting youth through campaigns in schools, colleges, and community spaces.

Institutional Structures

The Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment is the nodal authority for prevention and rehabilitation, while the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) focuses on supply reduction. Coordination with state governments and NGOs is essential but often inconsistent.

Analysis and Findings

1. Policy Coherence: Policies often exist in silos. Law enforcement, public health, and education sectors operate independently, weakening integration.
 2. Implementation Deficit: Shortage of trained counselors, limited de-addiction centers, and underfunding reduce the reach of initiatives.
 3. Awareness Campaigns: NMBA has expanded preventive education, yet rural and remote areas remain underserved.
 4. Intergovernmental Gaps: Some states demonstrate strong implementation, while others lack adequate administrative capacity.
 5. Rehabilitation Challenges: Rehabilitation programs rarely include vocational training, limiting reintegration of recovered individuals.

Policy Implications

- Establish a national coordination body that integrates health, education, and enforcement agencies.
 • Enhance local governance roles by empowering

Panchayati Raj Institutions and municipal bodies to run community-based programs.

- Invest in evidence-based interventions such as school-based life skills education.
- Allocate dedicated budgetary support for rehabilitation and skill-building programs.
- Shift toward rehabilitative justice, treating users as patients rather than criminals.

CONCLUSION

Drug prevention is not only a public health necessity but also an administrative responsibility that tests the capacity of government systems. India's experience reveals that while strong legislative and programmatic foundations exist, administrative fragmentation and weak implementation dilute their impact. Future strategies should prioritize integration, local participation, and evidence-based policymaking. Public administration has a crucial role in ensuring that drug prevention evolves from a punitive model toward a comprehensive governance approach that protects citizens, strengthens institutions, and fosters social resilience.

REFERENCES

1. AIIMS. (2019). *Magnitude of substance use in India*. Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India.
2. Gupta, R., & Kumar, A. (2021). Community-based approaches in drug prevention: Lessons for India. *Journal of Social Policy Studies*, 18(2), 45–59.
3. Hughes, C., & Stevens, A. (2010). What can we learn from the Portuguese decriminalization of illicit drugs? *British Journal of Criminology*, 50(6), 999–1022.
4. Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment. (2020). *Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan guidelines*. Government of India.
5. Sharma, P. (2018). Legislative measures against drug abuse in India: An evaluation. *Indian Journal of Public Policy*, 12(1), 23–40.
6. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2023). *World drug report*. UNODC.