

High School Children's Understanding and views of Drug Consumption and Abuse: A cross-sectional study

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ABSTRACT

Aim: To determine the degree of understanding and judgment of drug misuse amongst high school students.

Study design: A cross-sectional study

Place and Duration: This study was conducted in schools of Hyderabad Pakistan from June 2021 to August 2021.

Methodology: A survey and a self-structured discussion were used to gather information from 290 high school students about their understanding and perceptions of drug misuse. Empirical inferential statistics were used to analyze the data.

Results: The frequency of drug addiction among questioned students was 14.5 percent, with males more than females. Exploratory curiosity, according to 35% of students, is the greatest prominent reason for substance addiction. 42.8 percent of students learned about it online, and the majority of them are conscious of the negative consequences of drug misuse.

Conclusion: According to the findings, peer influence and quick access to drugs in society are major significant factors in drug usage, with exploratory curiosity being the greatest prominent cause. A preventive plan should be implemented to eliminate this heinous act from our society.

Keywords: Schools, Children, drug abuse

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a phase of significant transformation in physical development, intellectual capacities, and societal interactions. It's a pivotal and transforming time in one's life, and drug abuse seems to have become a huge global health issue that is being studied extensively. Drugs were once used to regulate and cure disease as well as relieve discomfort. Drugs are defined as any substance (other than food) taken to avoid, detect, cure, or alleviate signs of an illness or abnormal state. [1] The consumption of such substances means drug use. Drug abuse is described as risky use, a usage that causes an individual to fail to meet commitments or land one in judicial trouble, or use that persists despite producing continuous interpersonal issues. [2] From ancient times, drug use has formed a role in man's life. As of 3500 years ago, opium has been utilized for medicinal reasons. Morphine and codeine were found in 1806 and 1832, respectively. Cocaine was first produced from coca plant leaves around 1860. [3] Substance use is also described as the self-adulation of chemicals to create psychoactive effects regardless of knowledge of their possible negative effects, whereas drug abuse is defined as the use of a drug that has a legitimate medical function but is being used for an inappropriate reason. [4]

Substance misuse among adolescents is on the rise around the world, wreaking havoc on their lives in terms of financial loss, death, and illness. [5] Alcohol consumption by students continues to be a serious problem. A recent study has revealed that cerebral growth persists far into young adulthood [6], and that alcohol usage can withhold this growth. [7, 8] Numerous research from other nations found that young people began using

drugs when they were 11-14 years old. [9, 10] Several studies in Asia and the United Kingdom have also found a rise in teenage drug usage, rendering it a major societal issue. [11, 12] Peer influence is one of the most critical variables linked to drug misuse. Peer influence is one of the most critical variables linked to drug misuse. Further variables that contribute to drug usage include exploratory curiosity, familial influence, an absence of parental monitoring, and character issues. [13] Some variables that safeguard against substance misuse include efficient family socialization, connection with parents, as well as religious views. [14] Adolescents who abuse substances may face a variety of issues, including education, wellness, and peer relationships. [15] They may also be subjected to unintentional damage and an issue with overdosing.

With regards to knowledge and attitudes concerning drug misuse, there is only a little research. So, the aim of this study was to examine middle and high school students' understanding and perceptions concerning substance misuse in order to establish a foundation of understanding and view of substance abuse in our society.

METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional survey was used to analyze secondary school students' perceptions of drug misuse. Permission was taken from the ethical review committee of the institute. The notion of substance abuse amongst school children was investigated using a self-administered semi-structured survey. Participants were recognized by their identification cards and were chosen randomly. A self-reporting survey was used to survey 290 students. There were 3 components in the form. Demography was covered

in part A, understanding and behaviors about drug abuse were covered in part B, while their mindset towards drug misuse was covered in part C. The children were provided a quick summary of the survey before being requested to tick the appropriate response based on their understanding. The inquiry was established on the participants' degree of understanding regarding substance abuse and their attitudes about drug consumption. The research was conducted in schools of Hyderabad. School-going children aged 12 to 18 years make up the majority of the study participants. Students in grades 10 to 12 made up the majority of the study participants.

The study lasted 60 days, from June 2021 to August 2021. We went to 11 schools and chose the participants to engage in the research. Everyone who took part in the study was handed questionnaires to complete. Participants were given 60 minutes to complete the form after receiving the questions.

The content on the completed form was double-checked to confirm that it was accurate. The information was imported into Excel 2010, and qualitative inferential analysis was used to analyze it. The data were summarized using these metrics. The school officials arranged accessibility to the involved institutions. Each participant signed a written expressed permission form. The student's privacy was guaranteed. Furthermore, the participants' names and other identifiers were not needed to maintain anonymity.

RESULTS

A total of 85.1 percent of the 290 students chosen from secondary schools were male, while 14.9 percent were females. There was 33.2 percent of students in the 12-15 year age group and 66.8% in the 16-18 year age group. The study had 290 students in all, and the data were analyzed in three main areas, the profile of demographics, factors influencing these pupils' substance misuse, and the students' perceptions of drug misuse and the harms connected with it.

According to participant demographics, 66.8% of students were between the ages of 16 and 18 years, while 33.2 percent were between the ages of 12 and 15 years. In terms of gender, 14.9 percent of the participants were female. The majority of the students were in the eleventh and twelfth grades. The frequency of drug misuse was 14.5 percent, with 66.7 percent of males and 33.3 percent of females abusing drugs. Table 1 highlights some of the variables that can contribute to substance misuse. The mother of 27 (69.5%) of the participants were uneducated. A total of 58 percent of student friends who introduced them to substances took drugs. Narcotics were easily accessible in the neighborhood for 62 percent of the children.

Table 2 shows potential reasons for drug misuse based on student understanding. Intrigue was cited as the primary cause by 83 (29 percent) of questioned teenagers, while peer influence was cited by 68 (24.9 percent) of teenagers. Only five individuals (2.4%) thought that drug addiction can be used to give a public talk. Table 3 demonstrates that the internet (n=116, 40.8 percent) was the most common source of information regarding substance abuse, following mass media (26.7 percent),

friends (17.6), and school (14.9 percent). The majority of them (95.2 percent) believe that drug consumption is harmful to one's health, and they all agree that it is a negative habit that should not be tolerated in society. Table 4 demonstrates that the most susceptible age group for drug dependence is 15 to 18 years old (61.1 percent n= 173).

Table1: Distribution of potential elements that contribute to drug misuse

Characteristics	Response	Number (n=38)	Percentage
Mothers education	Uneducated	11	30.5
	Educated	27	69.5
Relation with parents	Good	23	62.1
	Not good	15	37.9
Relation between parents	Good	25	67.4
	Not good	13	32.6
Substance user in the family	Present	02	6.8
	Not present	36	93.2
Friends use drugs	Yes	15	41.1
	No	23	58.9
Drug accessible in society	Yes	23	62.1
	No	15	37.9

Table 2: Participants understanding of the most likely causes of substance misuse

Causes	Number	Percentage
Curiosity	83	29
Peer influence	68	24.9
For the purpose of experiencing pleasure and delight	40	13.6
Household dispute	33	12.4
Mental illness	26	8.6
Memory enhancement	14	5.6
To win a sporting competition	11	3.2
Giving a public speech	05	2.4

Table 3: Adolescents' perceptions of drug misuse and the harms connected with it

Characteristics	Response	Number	Percentage
Where did hear about Substance addiction?	Friends	53	17.6
	Media	73	26.7
	Internet	116	40.8
	School	48	14.9
Is substance addiction bad for health?	Correct	273	95.2
	Incorrect	17	4.8
Is drug addiction regarded as a harmful habit in your neighborhood?	Correct	275	97.9
	Incorrect	05	2.1
In your perspective, what is substance abuse? (bad)	Correct	290	100
	Incorrect	0	

Table 4: Participants groups based on the types, symptoms, and effects of drug usage.

Characteristics	Response	Number	Percentage
Substance misuse is prevalent in this age group (15-18 years)	Correct	173	61.1
	Incorrect	117	38.9
Substance abuse causes (stress, family problem, peer pressure, joy seeking)	Correct	193	68.2
	Incorrect	97	31.8
What types are available? (sniff, smoke, injection, tablet, drinking)	Correct	183	64.7
	Incorrect	107	35.3
Symptoms of persons who are addicted to drugs (toxication)	Correct	127	44.7
	Incorrect	163	55.3
What impact does the medicine have on his or her life? (Deterioration of physical and mental health, lack of interest in work)	Correct	205	72.5
	Incorrect	85	27.5
The drug's impact on the family (Financial burden, quarrels, fights)	Correct	192	67.9
	Incorrect	98	32.1

They also stated that anxiety, family conflicts, and peer influences are all major factors in substance abuse. Respondents were conscious that substance abuse promotes worsening of their bodily and psychological health (n=127, 44.7 percent) and that substance abuse causes impairment of their bodily and mental health (n=205, 72.5 percent).

DISCUSSION

In this study, 85.1% were male and 14.9% were female. Out of those 290 students, substance abusers accounted for 48 students, 16.9% of whom were male and 9.59 percent of whom were female. Considering that youths make up a fourth of the global population and frequently beyond a fifth of a nation's population, their participation in many risky behaviors and the consequences of such participation are a major global health issue. Throughout adolescence, health hazard activities such as cigarettes and substance abuse can coalesce, and participation in these numerous risk activities can contribute to health concerns such as trauma and drug misuse during development and teenage years, as well as medical complications later in life. According to the National Longitudinal Alcohol Epidemiologic research, the incidence of lifelong alcohol dependency and misuse decreases dramatically with advancing age at initiation of consumption. [16] Juvenile alcohol consumption has been linked to increased risky sexual behavior (unprotected intercourse, many couples, being intoxicated or high while doing the act, and pregnancies) as well as scholastic issues, other drug use, and deviant conduct in late teenage years. [17]

When it comes to substance abuse, researchers mainly focus on specific social groups, such as adolescents and adults. [18] Typically, such are the individuals that face extremely difficult and demanding lifestyles, as well as parental expectations and biological inclinations. The most major difficulties for males were drinking and drug misuse. [19] These circumstances contribute to some exploration and drug misuse. Adolescents are especially vulnerable and more susceptible to experimenting and exploring drugs if they are going through a difficult time period in their life which then leads to substance misuse and in some cases, addiction. This study is identical to one study which discovered that male drug users outnumber female drug users. [20] Another study found that the incidence of drug abuse background was found in males in the form of alcohol consumption. [21] We could minimize our youth's addiction to different substances by developing good, comfortable, and safe engaging surroundings. According to a Nigerian survey, there is no quantitatively substantial gender disparity amongst secondary school students. [22] The average age of first substance usage in this research was 15-18 years. This conclusion is comparable to those of research conducted in South America and Nigeria. Maternal literacy, relationship with either between families and potential hazard are all potential variables that lead to drug usage amongst respondents. In this study, 62.1 percent of students thought that easy access to drugs in the public was the most frequent cause of drug misuse. Poor academic achievement, melancholy, and parents who smoke tobacco

were all linked to greater rates of substance misuse in another research. [23] According to RR Griffiths et al research, substance abuse is more likely when drugs are readily obtainable. [24] Another study indicated that simple access to alcohol, particularly home-brewed liquor that is used in the public contributes to a rise in the prevalence of alcohol consumption among adults. [25]

A total of 62.1 percent of the participants believe that their relationship with their parents is a component in their substance usage. Numerous studies have found a link between teenage drinking and a lower incidence of substance abuse. Parents, according to certain research, have a vital role in preventing drug usage by acting as potential treatments. They encourage parent-child drug misuse dialogue and exposure. [26] Adolescent inquisitive, the pursuit of joy, psychiatric disorders, peer influences, or a lack of information about the complications of substance abuse are all potential reasons for substance abuse in this study. So, peer influence, familial connection, educational setting, and neighborhood are all elements that contribute to drug dependence. In my survey, 24.9 percent of participants thought peer influence was a major factor in substance misuse. This discovery coincides with the findings of a number of other studies. [27] These investigators also discovered that drug addicts crave social acceptance and regard it as a representation of group cohesiveness. As a result, this discovery can be used in a drug addiction preventive program. In this study, 72.5 percent of individuals were conscious of the effects of drug misuse on their lives, and 67.9% of participants were conscious of the effects of drug usage on their families, such as financial burdens, squabbles, and fighting. These findings are similar to others, which found that 34% of participants have insufficient awareness concerning drug abuse. According to a survey performed in West Bengal schools, children were well-versed in the terms of drug usage and its negative consequences (83.6 percent in urban and 62.5 percent in a rural area) [28] Additional study in a Jordanian teenage group found that students had appropriate awareness of the adverse effects of drugs on the person's body and community and that they understand that even smoking is incredibly hazardous to the body when used frequently. In this study, 40.8 percent of respondents claimed they got their knowledge from the web, and 26.7 percent got their knowledge from the media. As a result, the research reveals that substance abuse understanding is linked to schooling, peer influences, exploratory curiosity, and parents' relationship with the child.

CONCLUSION

This study adds to our understanding of how our society views drug usage. Because drug accessibility is so readily available in our society, it is a major factor contributing to drug dependence. As a result, some action should be taken to reduce drug accessibility. This study establishes a foundation of substance abuse frequency in our neighborhood. If drug misuse amongst our children becomes more prevalent, it will have an impact on not just the bodily and emotional health of those engaged, but also on the state's financial, academic, and social development. As a result, policymakers, medical professionals,

educators, guardians, and counselors should cooperate together to develop a drug misuse awareness campaign so that the issue does not worsen in the future.

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