

A STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE ON YOUTH IN INDIA

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Abstract:

The epidemic of substance abuse in youths is increasing at an alarming rate in India and this is the direct result of the changing cultural values, fierce competition in the fields of education and employment, growing economic burden on families and declining supportive bonds for youths in this transitional age. The impact is that youths witness their first experimentation towards various drugs, especially those that are easily available including glues, tobacco, cannabis, and alcohol. Amongst youths, the highest at-risk population includes street children, child labourers, and teens who have a family history of drug abuse and other emotional and behavioral challenges at home. The present study is focusing on how substance use is impacting the youths in India.

Keywords: Substance use, alarming rate, tobacco, cannabis etc.

Introduction:

Every year, the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking is celebrated on June 26 with the aim to sensitize individuals and communities around the challenge of drug abuse and addiction as well as its impact. With this global observance, individuals, communities, and numerous organizations aim to not only raise awareness to fight against substance abuse but also strengthen comprehensive action and collaboration to achieve the aim of a global society free of drug abuse. The effect of substance abuse is highest on the psychological health of adolescents with the possibility of developing substance use disorder, leading to major behaviour changes observed, including mood disorders, depression, anxiety, thought disorders such as schizophrenia, as well as a personality disorders like antisocial personality traits. Use of tobacco (nicotine) in adolescence and young adulthood poses a unique risk for long-term and long-lasting effects on developing brains as nicotine changes the way synapses are formed, harming the parts that control attention and learning.

India also has a huge at-risk to substance abuse young population with 40% being below the age of 18 years. As observed a notable proportion of teens in West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana have been using gateway drugs. Every year, about 55,000 children take up to smoking generally hailing from low socio-economic strata. This risky behavior is often initiated during childhood and adolescence, as more than 70% of adult smokers report that they started smoking on a daily basis prior to age 18.

The brain continues to develop until about the age of 25 years and during adolescence, the brain growth is not complete and is susceptible to the damaging effects of tobacco smoke. Consequences of substance abuse also include quarrels with friends, family or relatives, as well as accidents and severe health disorders, with some also losing their jobs or dropped out of school due to poor performance. One study reported that three percent of adolescents who used

substances were also involved in criminal activities like petty thefts, burglary, vandalism of public and private property amongst others.

Literature Review:

Araiza (2014) found that substance abuse among adolescents has very high risk factors. The risk factors are; peer pressure on teenager's behaviours, easy availability of substances, experimental curiosity, family influence, lack of parental supervision and personality problems and lack of community based activities. The major risk factors for substance abuse among adolescents are economic deprivation, academic failure, sensation seeking and peer use. Among adolescents, substance abuse often occurs in conjunction with risk taking behaviours. Substance abuse occurs as part of a cluster of problems and risk-taking behaviours. Predisposing factors include temperament, genetics neurobehavioral disinheriting, social competencies, parenting, abuse/neglect and peer behaviours.

Richardson et al (2013) in their study they focused on self-esteem among young adolescents. Self-esteem is protective against young adolescents' initiation of tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana use. Factors such as peer rejection, parental neglect, school failure and being stigmatized for a variety of reasons led to low self-esteem. Researchers explore that self-esteem has important role in the reduction of the effect of peer substance use among adolescents. Further, the role of self-esteem as a partial mediator in the relationship between peer substance use and substance abuse among adolescents, indicates that adolescents with high self-esteem are less affected by their peers in relation to substance abuse.

Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan (2021) The Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment launched the website for the Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan (NMBA) on the occasion of International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking on 26 June 2021, which is aiming to strengthen action and cooperation in achieving the goal of a sustainable world free of substance abuse. The entire world is facing the menace of drug addiction which has a devastating impact on the addict, individual, family and a large section of society. The ministry has been mandated to reduce drug demand. It coordinates and oversees all aspects of drug abuse prevention including assessment of the extent of the problem, preventive action, treatment and rehabilitation of addicts, dissemination of information, and public awareness and is mandated to run de-addiction centres.

Objectives of the study:

- To understand the concept of substance abuse in India
- To know the impact of substance abuse on youth in India
- To find the intervention of social work in controlling substance abuse among youth

Research Methodology:

The researcher proposes to adopt a Descriptive research design for the study, the descriptive research design will be more helpful, the description is the fact-finding investigation with adequate interpretation, so to find the facts of substance abuse among youth in India and its impact on youth in India which relates to health, education and socio-economic development of youth.

Impact of substance abuse on youth:

Young people who persistently abuse substances often experience an array of problems, including academic difficulties, health-related problems (including mental health), poor peer relationships, and involvement with the juvenile justice system. Additionally, there are consequences for family members, the community, and the entire society.

Academics: Declining grades, absenteeism from school and other activities, and increased potential for dropping out of school are problems associated with adolescent substance abuse. Hawkins, Catalano, and Miller (1992) cite research indicating that a low level of commitment to education and higher truancy rates appear to be related to substance use among adolescents. Cognitive and behavioral problems experienced by alcohol- and drug-using youth may interfere with their academic performance and also present obstacles to learning for their classmates (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1992).

Physical health: Injuries due to accidents (such as car accidents), physical disabilities and diseases, and the effects of possible overdoses are among the health-related consequences of teenage substance abuse. Disproportionate numbers of youth involved with alcohol and other drugs face an increased risk of death through suicide, homicide, accident, and illness. Transmission of HIV/AIDS primarily occurs through exposure to body fluids of an infected person during sexual contact or through sharing of unsterile drug-injection equipment. Another primary means of transmission is from mothers to infants during pregnancy or the birth process. Many substance-abusing youth engage in behaviour that places them at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases.

Although alcohol-related traffic fatalities for youth have declined, young people are still overrepresented in this area. In 1995 alone, more than 2,000 youth (ages 15 to 20) were killed in alcohol-related car crashes (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 1997). These limited examples illustrate the catastrophic health-related consequences of substance abuse among adolescents. Besides personal and family distress, additional healthcare costs and loss of future productivity place burdens on the community.

Mental health: Mental health problems such as depression, developmental lags, apathy, withdrawal, and other psychosocial dysfunctions frequently are linked to substance abuse among adolescents. Substance-abusing youth are at higher risk than nonusers for mental health problems, including depression, conduct problems, personality disorders, suicidal thoughts, attempted suicide, and suicide. Marijuana use, which is prevalent among youth, has been shown to interfere with short-term memory, learning, and psychomotor skills. Motivation and psychosexual/emotional development also may be influenced (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1992).

Peers: Substance-abusing youth often are alienated from and stigmatized by their peers. Adolescents using alcohol and other drugs also often disengage from school and community activities, depriving their peers and communities of the positive contributions they might otherwise have made.

Families: In addition to personal adversities, the abuse of alcohol and other drugs by youth may result in family crises and jeopardize many aspects of family life, sometimes resulting in family dysfunction. Both siblings and parents are profoundly affected by alcohol- and drug-involved youth (Nowinski, 1990). Substance abuse can drain a family's financial and emotional resources (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1992).

Social and economic consequences: The social and economic costs related to youth substance abuse are high. They result from the financial losses and distress suffered by alcohol- and drug-related crime victims, increased burdens for the support of adolescents and young adults who are not able to become self-supporting, and greater demands for medical and other treatment services for these youth (Gropper, 1985).

Delinquency: There is an undeniable link between substance abuse and delinquency. Arrest, adjudication, and intervention by the juvenile justice system are eventual consequences for many youth engaged in alcohol and other drug use. It cannot be claimed that substance abuse causes delinquent behaviour or delinquency causes alcohol and other drug use. However, the two behaviours are strongly correlated and often bring about school and family problems, involvement with negative peer groups, a lack of neighbourhood social controls, and physical or sexual abuse (Hawkins et al., 1987; Wilson and Howell, 1993). Possession and use of alcohol and other drugs are illegal for all youth. Beyond that, however, there is strong evidence of an association between alcohol and other drug use and delinquent behaviour of juveniles. Substance abuse is associated with both violent and income-generating crimes by youth. This increases fear among community residents and the demand for juvenile and criminal justice services, thus increasing the burden on these resources. Gangs, drug trafficking, prostitution, and growing numbers of youth homicides are among the social and criminal justice problems often linked to adolescent substance abuse.

Social work intervention:

Social work practice in a number of specialist areas including working with children and families, older people, people with mental ill health, people with disabilities, and the youth. However, in Botswana and with regard to social work practice, it appears that little attention has been given to substance use, its problematic nature, and the negative consequences it has on the individual, family, community, and nation at large. Prevalence research on substance use among specific social work service user groups seems to be limited. Nevertheless, there is a great deal of evidence globally that substance use coexists with the type of health and social problems social worker's encounter. These include experiences of inadequate parenting, a child being raised by parents who abuse substances, and, as a result, copying their behaviour and in turn abusing alcohol and drugs (Moodley, Matjila and Moosa 2012). Forrester and Harwin (2008) found that a third of youth involved in substance use do so because one or both of their parents abuse alcohol and/or other substances. As a result, these young people need social work intervention.

Intervention programmes for substance abuse should have a two-pronged approach that caters to both the prevention and treatment of drug abuse. Prevention programmes should focus on addressing initiation of various drugs. The interventions must be aimed at younger age groups, focusing on before the usual age of initiation. Effective enforcement of substance abuse policies

like tobacco control act can efficiently curb access of these products to adolescents. One of the major contributors to such prevention programmes apart from teachers should be parents of at-risk youth and adolescents. Such interventions should focus on psychosocial development than only prevention of target drug use as it has the potential to improve various aspects of a person's development. Regular parental monitoring, supervision, and enhanced child-parent communication can act as preventive measures towards substance abuse. Efficient parent training with family skill building, and structured family therapy can prevent illicit drug use.

Social work intervention in controlling substance abuse among youth in India is practiced with adopting following methods.

- School-based interventions
- Family-/community-based interventions
- Digital platforms
- Policy interventions
- Multicomponent interventions

Conclusion:

Evidently, substance abuse is a problem among youths in the nation. Noticeably, almost all youths are aware of its consequences, although some of them continue with the substance abuse. The study findings aim to contribute to a greater and deeper exploration of how social workers can be used to deal with substance abuse in schools. The results of the study indicate that there is a crucial need to deal with substance abuse and related problems affecting students in secondary schools. To this end, it is imperative that social workers contribute to this research area and be aware of the dynamics and/or modalities of related treatment. In this regard, they will be able to play a greater role in advocating for their clients to receive the most effective interventions.

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