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Substance use among adolescent students

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Abstract

The adolescence period of life is crucial in an individual's life as it is when a lot of changes occur physically and psychologically. The study was carried out among 240 adolescent students of classes 8 to 12 with the objective to assess, evaluate and compare substance use and substance use behaviour patterns among adolescent students. Descriptive statistics of N=240 reported, 81.7% had taken one or the other substances in the past; of which hookah smoking 66.3% was predominant, followed by alcohol 45%, marijuana 26.3% and Cigarettes 25% respectively. A one-way ANOVA revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in alcohol use between classes ($F(4,235) = [10.41]$, $p < .001$) and experimentation 59.2% ($M=1.4$, $SD=.78$) was the major contributor to substance use among adolescents followed by the following trend 42.5% ($M=1.2$, $SD=.74$), partying 42.1% ($M=1.2$, $SD=.74$), social media influence 20% ($M=1$, $SD=.62$), seeing family members 7.5% ($M=.8$, $SD=.49$), and peer group influence 6.3% ($M=.88$, $SD=.48$).

Keywords: Substance, alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, hookah, school and students

Introduction

Adolescence is the time when all of a sudden, the world looks different. The adolescence period of life is crucial in an individual's life as it is when a lot of changes occur physically and psychologically. It is the transitional period that links the adolescent between childhood and adulthood of his life. Adolescence is universally a time of vulnerability to different influences when adolescents initiate various behaviours, which may include substance use. A desire to experiment and explore can manifest in a range of behaviours exploring sexual relationships, alcohol, cigarettes, tobacco and other substance use and abuse. It is the time of intense influence of peers, and the outside world in society as a result the desire for independence and autonomy increases and therefore propensity for risky sensation-seeking behaviour increases because reward motivation precede increases in cognitive control.

World Drug Report (2018) reported drug use among young people differs from country to country and depends on the social and economic circumstances of those involved. However, drug use among young people is higher compared to older people. Early age (12-14 years old) to late (15-17 years old) adolescence is a critical risk period for the initiation of substance use and that substance use may peak among young people aged 18-25 years^[1].

In a study report by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, the most common form of substance abuse amongst adolescents is tobacco and alcohol, followed by inhalants and cannabis and the average age of onset of tobacco use was observed to be as low as 12 years². The tobacco use situation in India is complex owing to the availability of various forms of tobacco. Also, adolescence and early adulthood, ie, 15 to 24 years, are considered to be the most susceptible phase of life for initiation of tobacco use in India. Based on available evidence, it is estimated that 5% to 25% of Indian adolescents currently use or have ever used tobacco. Even though smokeless tobacco is used less commonly, high rates of its use have been reported in India among adolescents aged 13 to 15 years (15% of boys and 5% of girls)^[2].

UDAYA study, an initiative led by the Population Council, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Packard Foundation, showed that substance abuse is high among adolescent boys aged 15-19 years. The study probed on tobacco use, alcohol consumption and drug use among adolescents and also concluded that the consumption was higher among rural boys in comparison to urban boys^[3].

The most commonly used substances among adolescents are alcohol, marijuana, and tobacco.

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About two-thirds of students try alcohol by class 12 and half of 9th through 12th class students reported ever having used marijuana. About 4 in 10, class 9 through class 12 students reported having tried cigarettes [4].

Substance use among adolescent's ranges from experimentation to severe substance use disorders. All substance use, even experimental use, puts adolescents at risk of short-term problems, such as accidents, fights, unwanted sexual activity, and overdose. Substance use also interferes with adolescent brain development.

Methods and Materials

Data was collected by using a self-structured tool consisting of a demographic profile and substance use checklist from a stratified random sample of 240 adolescent students studying in classes 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 of CBSE Board Schools with an objective to assess, evaluate and compare substance use and substance use behaviour patterns among adolescent

students. Prior to data collection from samples, informed written consent was taken from the parents of the study samples.

Results and Discussion

Descriptive statistics of N=240 reported, 81.7% (196) had taken one or the other substances in the past; of which hookah smoking 66.3% (M=2, SD=.47) was predominant, followed by alcohol 45% (M=1, SD=.49), marijuana 26.3% (M=1, SD=.44) and Cigarette 25% (M=1, SD=.43) respectively.

There was a significant relationship between substance use behaviour among adolescent students and habitat, religion, fathers education, father's occupation, mothers education, mother's occupation, monthly family income, relationship with father, fathers profile, mothers profile and pretest knowledge score (p<0.05).

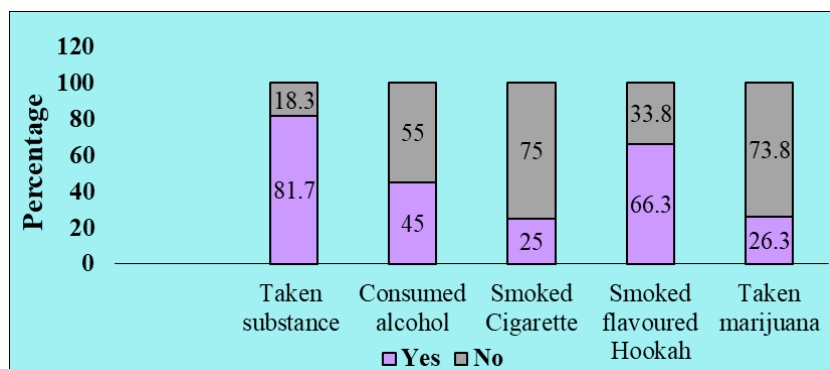


Fig 1: Bar diagram showing the percentage distribution of substances used by adolescent students

Substance use was highest among classes 11 and 12 adolescent students and reported the same percentage i.e 89.6% of substance use followed by class 9 (81.3%), class 10 (77.1%) and class 8 (70.8%). A one-way ANOVA revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in alcohol use between classes (F (4,235) = [10.41], p = <.001).

There was no statistically significant difference in classes and cigarette smoking (F (4,235) = [.827], p = .509); hookah

(F (4,235) = [2.641], p = .035); and marijuana us (F (4,235) = [3.851], p = .005).

The frequency of substance use by the adolescent students was 44% for 1-2 times, 42% 3-5 times and 14% for more than five times. The majority (71.7%) of the parents of the adolescents were not aware of their child's substance use behaviour, 6.3% of them were aware and 3.3% of the study samples were not sure if their parents knew about their substance use.

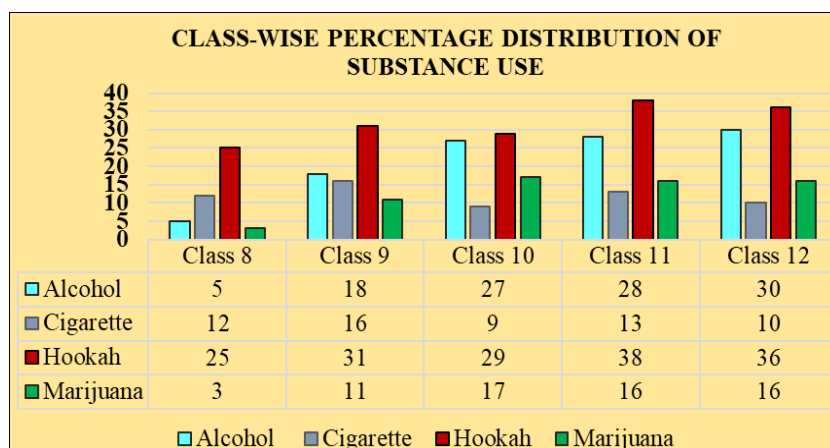


Fig 2: Class-wise comparison of substances used by study samples

Experimentation 59.2% (M=1.4, SD=.78) was the major contributor to substance use among adolescents followed by the following trend 42.5% (M=1.2, SD=.74), partying 42.1% (M=1.2, SD=.74), social media influence 20% (M=1,

SD=.62), seeing family members 7.5% (M=.8, SD=.49), and peer group influence 6.3% (M=.88, SD=.48). However, partying (16.3%) was the main reason for substance use in class 12 students; while experimentation (13.3%,11.3%) for

classes 11 and 9 respectively; social media influence (14.2%) among class 10 students and following trend

(8.3%) was the contributing factor for substance uses among class 8 students.

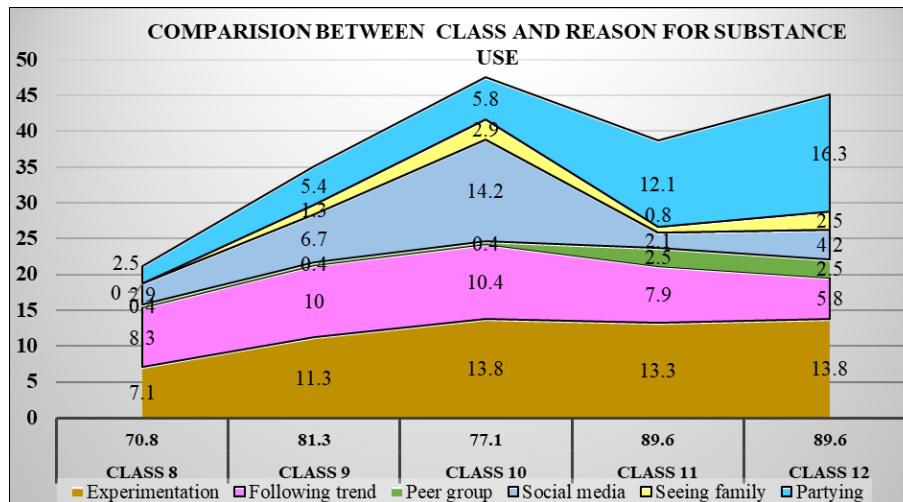


Fig 3: A stacked area chart displaying the reasons for substance use between classes

Conclusion

The prevalence of substance use among adolescents is increasing at an alarming rate worldwide and this is the direct result of the changing cultural values, fierce competition in the fields of education and employment, the growing economic burden on families and declining supportive bonds for adolescents in this transitional age. Adolescents are vulnerable to the effects of substance use and are at increased risk of developing long-term consequences, such as mental health disorders, underachievement in school, a substance use disorder, and higher rates of addiction if they regularly use alcohol and marijuana, nicotine, or other drugs during adolescence.

Conflict of Interest

Not available

Financial Support

Not available

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