

## **A Study on Adolescent Substance abuse in Delhi-NCR**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Adolescence is an in-between stage of physical and psychological human development that usually occurs during the period from puberty to adulthood. It is a crucial phase since these are formative years in the life of an individual when major physical, psychological and behavioural changes take place. It offers avenues for growth in aptitude, self-sufficiency, self-esteem and inter-personal relationships. However, it also brings countless perils. Drug abuse is one of them all among adolescents as teenagers are open to experimentation out of curiosity and peer pressure. Alcohol is the biggest malefactor in this regard as adolescents have access to it at parties, can obtain it from older friends who are of legal age to buy it, or may simply raid their parents' liquor cabinets. Also, many young people start using drugs during adolescence because they believe that doing so will boost their social acceptability and image.

The risk factors for drug use and abuse by adolescents may be a biological predisposition, personality traits that reflect a lack of social bonding, a low socio-economic status, strained interpersonal relationships and poor parental guidance and care. Drug- Addiction is characterized as destructive use and abuse of illicit substances that cause many serious social behavior and health-related problems including psychiatric symptomatology.

There is little information about the pattern of substance abuse among adolescents in India. With this background, the present study was undertaken to find out the prevalence of substance abuse of adolescents of slum area, Nizamuddin Basti, New Delhi.

Drug abuse in adolescent is becoming a universal health problem; however, in India, it is rampant and distressing as it is increasing at an alarming rate.

Initial use of drugs is commonly triggered by various factors like, peer pressure, (trying to be “cool”, to “fit in”), high need to be accepted, low tolerance level, poor coping mechanisms, influences of the media wherein these young adults create a ‘Fantasy World’ for themselves and without thinking about the consequences in their real lives., indulge in substance use leading to dysfunctionality in their overall well-being.

Towards the conclusion, I have emphasized and discussed some of the preventive strategies required to be executed to minimize drug abuse among adolescents in India.

## **OBJECTIVES**

To elicit the prevalence of substances abused in adolescents of the slum area in New Delhi.

## **METHOD**

Adolescents in the age group of 13- 18 years residing in the rural areas of Nizamuddin Basti, New Delhi where the sample population.

Through home visits, relevant data was obtained from their parents. Verbal consent was obtained from the parent(s) or guardian(s) for the interview.

The respondents were interviewed in small batches not exceeding 10 per day.

Detailed information about the frequency and pattern of substance abuse was collected.

All the adolescents who admitted that they smoked were classified as smokers. Those who smoked at least once per day were termed regular smokers. Those who smoked at least once a week were termed as occasional smokers. Those who smoked even less frequently like once in a month or so were called experimental smokers.

Similar criteria were used for alcohol and other drug users.

After the interview, necessary health education and counselling was given to the adolescents.

SPSS software was used for statistical analysis

## **RESULTS**

Substance abuse was found to be prevalent amongst 35 (70%) of 50 adolescents surveyed.

Smoking was prevalent among 54% of adolescents.

Alcohol was used by 51% and other drugs were used by 24% of the adolescents.

Nearly 41 % were regular smokers, while 32 % and 27 % were occasional and experimental smokers respectively.

Majority of alcohol drinkers (61%) were experimental while other drugs were used by few adolescents occasionally or experimentally.

There was a significant increase in substance abuse with an increase in age. 62% of the adolescents, as found began abusing drugs as they grew older.

## **DISCUSSION**

Substance abuse was found amongst 70% of adolescents in this study. Smoking was prevalent among 54% of adolescents in this study which is similar to the Global Youth Tobacco Survey conducted in Delhi, India which reported that three in 10 adolescents (30%) used tobacco. Smoking was prevalent among 54% of adolescents.

Alcohol was used by 51% of the sample population and other illicit drugs were used by 24% of the adolescents whereas, nearly 41 % were regular smokers, while 32 % were occasional and 27% experimental smokers. Majority of alcohol drinkers (61%) were experimental while other drugs were used by few adolescents occasionally or experimentally.

There was a significant increase in substance abuse with an increase in age. 62% of the adolescents, as found began abusing drugs as they grew older.

It was found that there was an increase in the prevalence of substance abuse with the increase in age.

It was observed that this can be attributed to the fact that the initiation of substance abuse is experimental but with continuous exposure to the substance, habituation develops resulting in addiction. Efforts directed towards health education at schools and community levels need to have an encouraging impact on substance abuse prevention among adolescents.

In India, substance abuse among children has received attention only recently, and perhaps, much work needs to be done to address this issue specifically. The very first step in itself is to acknowledge this emerging problem that needs to be proactively

addressed. It is essential to bring in all stakeholders together to cater the issue through a multipronged approach with an equal focus on prevention as well as treatment efforts.

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