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**SUBSTANCE-  
RELATED KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS IN MIZORAM:  
A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY**

**P.L Vanrozama1\***,

Ph.D. Research Scholar, Dept. of Sociology, Periyar University, Periyar Palkalai Nagar, Salem  
636011, Tamil Nadu

**Dr. C. Gobalakrishnan2**

Assistant Professor, Dept. of Sociology, Periyar University, Periyar Palkalai Nagar, Salem  
636011, Tamil Nadu

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**Abstract**

**Background:** Knowledge and attitude about substance use are of vital importance for prevention as well as treatment of substance abuse especially in the youth as it is the age when the majority of drug users start using of various substances.

**Objective:** This study aims to assess the drug related knowledge and attitude among college students in Mizoram.

**Method:** College students (pursuing graduation) from two colleges were selected for this study. 'Drug related knowledge and attitude questionnaire for students', a self-reported questionnaire was employed in this study.

**Results:** The total sample consisted of 60 students, each 30 students from two colleges who were pursuing graduation course. Most of the students appeared to have adequate knowledge about addictive substances and their harmful effects but only a minority had knowledge about the available treatment. Again only a minority had negative attitude towards substance abusers and agreed for substance use by themselves or their friends or family.

**Conclusions:** Majority of students had adequate knowledge about harmful effects of addictive drugs and substances but had narrow information regarding treatment options. This highlights the need for spreading more awareness for prevention as well as treatment of drugs and substance related problems in Mizoram.

**Keywords:** *drugs, substance, knowledge, attitude, Mizoram.*

**Introduction**

Mizoram is one of the seven sister states in the North East of India. It shares land borders with Bangladesh and Myanmar. Mizoram's proximity to the border of Myanmar, from where heroin is sourced, is one of the main contributors to the prevalence of drug use and related drug driven HIV in the state. Over the past decade, Mizoram has been witnessing a significant increase in the number of drug users and more importantly the number of HIV infection because of drug use in its communities. The drug addiction in Mizoram has increased unexpectedly, especially among the college or school students.

**Social life of the Mizo**

The fabric of social life in the Mizo society has undergone tremendous change over the last few years. Previously the village and the clan formed units of Mizo society. The Mizo code of ethics or dharma focused on "**Tlawmngaihna**", an untranslatable term meaning that it was the obligation of all members of society to be hospitable, kind, unselfish, and helpful to others. Mizos are a close-knit society with no class distinction and no sexual discrimination. Seventy percent are cultivators and the village functions as a large family. Birth, marriage and death in the village are important occasions and the whole village would typically become involved. When there is a

death, the whole local community, as well as all family members of the deceased, mourns together in the residence of the deceased. This particular processes of mourning together last anywhere from a few weeks to over three months. (Mizoram Wikipedia, 2012)

Mizo's fastly give up their old customs and adopt the new mode of life which is greatly influenced by the western culture. Many of their present customs are mixtures of their old tradition and western pattern of life. The Mizo have certainly advanced far beyond that stage in which man sustained himself from natural vegetation, as he found it. (H.G.Joshi, 2005)

The purpose of this study is aims to assess the drug related knowledge and attitude among college students in Mizoram regarding substance abuse in 2018. Patterns of substance abuse among young people can be a useful indication of this potential problem among adults in the future. Taking a realistic look at the issue of drug addiction, we find that the use of substances and drugs have existed for centuries, so that now a lot of men and women, especially from adolescence to middle age, take drugs and are dependent on it. Substance abuse among adults typically begins in adolescence or early adulthood. It is one of the most important social damages that not only endangers the health of the individual and the community but also leads to mental and moral deterioration. Substance abuse refers to a maladaptive pattern of substance use leading to undesirable outcomes and frequent complications including cognitive, behavioral and psychological symptoms. Drug addiction is a major problem in developing countries. Since these countries have a young population, they are at a greater risk in this regard. The youth as the most important and most vulnerable group are at higher risk among other groups of the society. Drug use among young people can lead to serious damages to their health and quality of life. There is so much concern about this. Therefore, there are many concerns in this respect. A number of factors, including poverty, family problems, marital conflicts, improper role models for assimilation and unemployment increase the tendency to addiction.

The increase in substance abuse among young people and the variety of drugs available and their side effects form one of the most pressing health problems in young people. Like other young people, students are not immune from this problem. The effects of addiction are important in that its serious consequences are not confined to addicts, but usually families, friends and colleagues are also exposed to its destructive effects. The effects of substance abuse in students are deep and sometimes serious. These include: physical trauma, illegal activities, poor academic performance, high-risk sexual behaviors and high costs to the environment.

However, while addiction is referred to as the increase in demands for a substance resulting from physiological and psychological changes in the person, it should be noted that the first step is the result of the individual's subjective assessment of substance abuse. Therefore, while the information and knowledge about addiction and substance abuse are not low, it seems that victims, including students, do not have enough scientific and accurate knowledge and attitudes towards it. In spite of being aware of the harmful effects of substance use, adolescents take up this habit. This requires comprehensive prevention and control programs in schools, colleges and the community, targeted toward adolescents and their parents and other family members. Effective measures are required to encourage in shaping the attitude of college students toward self-confidence and adequacy, as also to prevent risk behavior among adolescents.

Adebowale et al. (2013) found that the level of knowledge of the students concerning drug abuse was fair, many of the respondents had positive attitudes for using illegal drugs. Jarali and Ogoncho (2016) indicated that majority (50 %) of adolescents had moderate level of knowledge on substance abuse and 30 per cent have inadequate level of knowledge and 20 per cent had adequate knowledge level on substance abuse. Tsering et al. (2010) concluded that out of 416 students, 52 (12.5 %) used or abused any one of the substances irrespective of time and frequency in lifetime; 26 (15.1 %) were among the urban students and 26 (10.7 %) were among their rural counterparts. Level of knowledge on harmfulness of substance use among students was very high and users were successful in influencing their peers into taking up this habit. Easy availability of substances, especially the licit ones, has been the most common reason for continuation, followed

by relief from stress and acceptability among friends (Sinha et al., 2004; Singh and Gupta, 2006; Sinha and Roychowdhury, 2004).

The present study aims to understand the level of knowledge and attitude on substances among college students in Mizoram with following objectives.

### **Objectives**

1. To understand the socio-economic conditions of the college students in Mizoram.
2. To find the level of substance related knowledge among college students in Mizoram.
3. To comprehend the attitude of college students in Mizoram regarding substance abuse.
4. To suggest fruitful recommendations to curb the prevalence of substance abuse in Mizoram.

### **Methodology**

The present study is intended to understand the level of knowledge and attitude of college students with regard to substance abuse in Mizoram. The state of Mizoram consists of eight districts and among the eight districts the present study is conducted in Aizawl district and Aizawl is the capital of Mizoram. In Aizawl district, there are around 12 arts and science colleges and among these 12 colleges the researchers selected two colleges namely Pachhunga University College and Govt. T. Romana College and from these two colleges each 30 students selected by convenience sampling method. The Pachhunga University College is age old institution and which offers arts, science and commerce subjects whereas the Govt. T.Romana College offers only arts subjects and both these colleges are located in the Aizawl city. For collecting the required data from the respondents, the structured questionnaire has been used and the questionnaire consists of personal profile of the respondents, particulars of their parents, knowledge on substance abuse, attitude about substance abuse. The collected information from the respondents were analyzed with the help of SPSS and for analyzing purpose the simple frequency table as well as percentile score have been used.

### **Results**

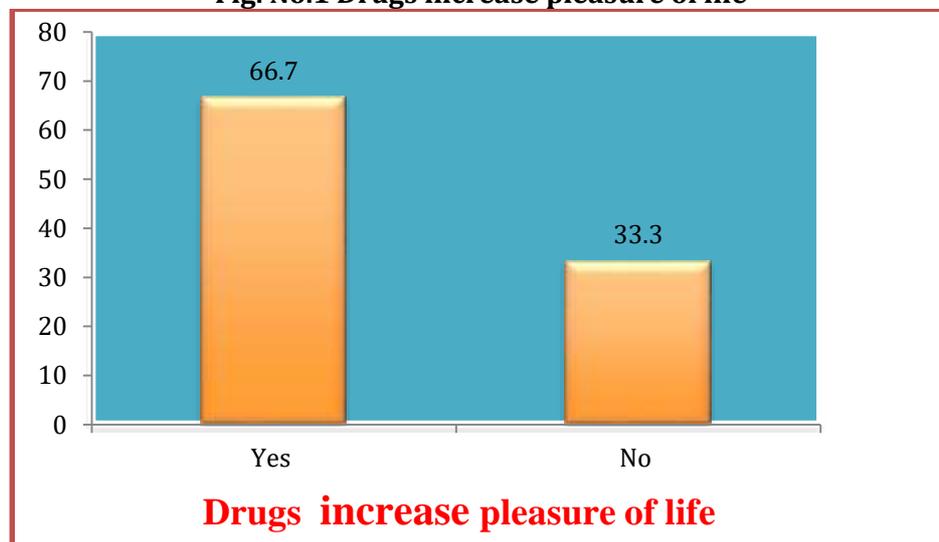
Among the total 60 respondents, 63 per cent of the respondents are males and the remaining 36 per cent of the respondents are females. As far as the age of the respondents, 36.67 percent belongs to the age category of 24-26 years, 30.0 per cent are aged between 18-20 years and another 30.0 per cent of the respondents are between the aged groups of 21-24 years, only 3.33 per cent of the total respondents belong to the age group of above 26 years. For the present study, there are two colleges selected, the first one is Pachhunga University College (PUC) and another one is T Romana College (TRC) both Colleges represent 30 respondents each. Considering the year study of the respondents, 45.0 per cent of the respondents are pursuing their 2<sup>nd</sup> year and 30.0 per cent of the respondents are in their 3<sup>rd</sup> year of study and remaining 25.0 per cent are in 1<sup>st</sup> year.

With regard to marital status of the respondents is concern, majority of the respondent 95.0 per cent of the respondent are still unmarried and another 5.0 per cent of the respondents are already married. While considering the educational qualification of the respondent's father, more than half of the respondents 51.7 per cent of the respondents fathers are Graduate, while 23.03 percent are Post-Graduate and 18.3 per cent of the respondent are class 12 standards and another 3.3 percent of their father are class 10 and remaining 3.3 percent have completed their M.Phil. Educational qualification of the respondent's mother is concerned, less than half of the respondents' (43.3 %) mothers are Graduate, while 26.7 percent are class 12 standards and another 15.0 percent of their mother are Post-Graduate and 13.3 per cent are only class 10 and remaining 1.7 per cent have hold M.Phil degree. As far as the total members in the family, less than

half of the respondents that is 31.7 per cent of the respondent family consist of 4 members, 31.7 per cent of the respondents' family with 5 members, 25.0 per cent of the respondents' family with 6 members and remaining 11.7 percent with 7 family members.

While asking about substance reduces stress or not among the total respondents, 58.3 per cent of the respondents said no and another 41.7 per cent of the respondents thinks substances reduces stress. In other words 41.7 per cent of the respondents have wrong belief. Since there are so many mechanisms available to reduce stress like doing yoga, listening music, watching devotional movies and reading books, magazines and the like. More than three fifth of the respondents (63.3%) disagree that the substance don't damage health if it is used in small amount and remaining 36.7 per cent agreed with substance don't damage health if used in small amount. From this table we may conclude that nearly two fifth of the respondents (36.7%) have wrong belief that substance don't damage the health if it is used in small amount. During initial days drug abusers use substances in a small amount later on they like the taste of substance in due course they become addicted and they started to consume in a large amount.

**Fig. No.1 Drugs increase pleasure of life**



Among the total respondents, 66.7 per cent said drugs increases pleasure of life and 33.3 per cent of the respondent said abusing drugs doesn't increase pleasure of life at all and these respondents' perceived that drugs is always harmful to the health. Out of the total respondents, two third of them have wrong perception that the usage of drugs increase the pleasure of life. There are many ways the individual could able to get pleasures like spending good amount of time with family, making fruitful interaction with friends and neighbours, spending the weekends in a useful manners and family outing. Instead of these useful ways, two-third of the respondents believes that drugs increase pleasure of life.

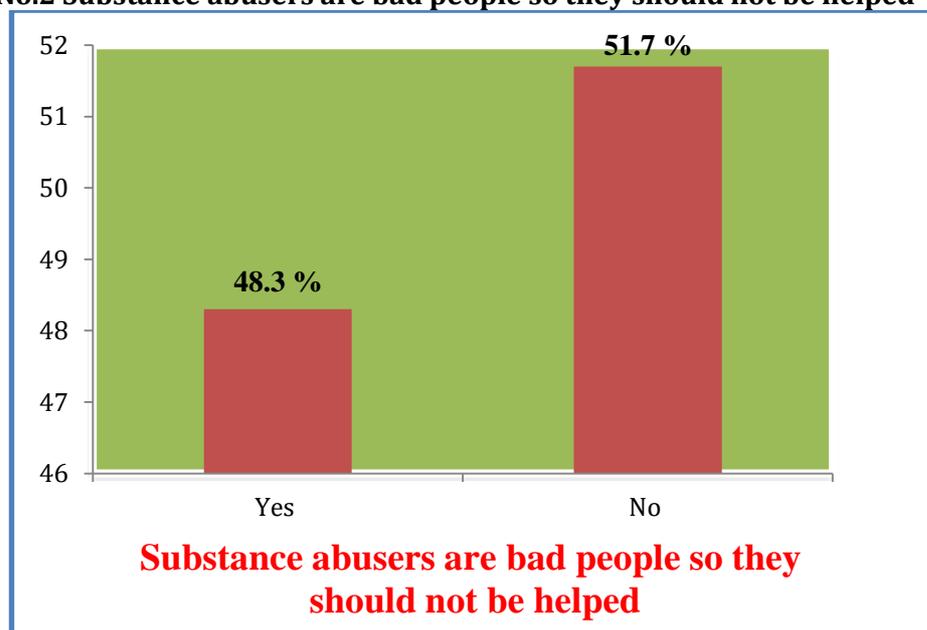
With regard to the statement 'substance abusing youth are influential in their peer group', nearly three fourth of the respondents that is 71.7 per cent think that substance abusing youth are not influential in their peer group for abusing substance and remaining 28.3 per cent of the respondents said substance abusing youth are influential in their peer group. All the respondents are studying in two different colleges and they are in the age group of youth and during this age group every youth must be very careful to select their peers. Because they spent most of their time with peers instead of family members, if the peers have good behavior then the concerned individual also adopt good behavior. In other words if the peers have bad behavior then its' also influence others in the peer group who follow the same behavior at certain extent.

As far as the statement ‘majority of substance abusers are rich people’, more than three fifth of the respondents (61.7%) said substance abusers are not only rich people and the remaining 38.3 per cent said substance abusers are only rich people. For substance abuse the richness or poverty doesn’t matter. Even the poor people are able to buy substances on the basis of their economic condition and the rich people could effort the quantity as well as the quantity of substance then that of the poor people. If their economic condition doesn’t permit them to buy the substances then they steal the money to buy substances once they become addicted.

While considering the statement ‘Harmful effects of drugs are only temporary’, more than two third of the respondents that is 61.7 per cent said the harmful effects of drugs are not temporary and 38.3 per cent of the respondents said the effects of drugs are only temporary. Most of the substance abusers initiate such behavior with little amount of substances and if they wonder of the taste of substance then they would increase the quantity of substance and in due course they become addicted therefore the harmful effects of drugs are not temporary.

For the statement ‘Injecting drugs may cause HIV’, almost all the respondents, 91.7 per cent believed that injecting drugs may cause HIV and remaining 8.3 per cent of the respondents never believes injecting drugs may cause the disease of HIV. Whenever the intravenous drug users injecting the drug with the single syringe needle then it is no problem for spreading of HIV but when they share the syringe needle with others then there will be risk of getting HIV. Because the influence of intoxication the intravenous drug users not able to check whether the syringe needle contains blood or not.

**Fig. No.2 Substance abusers are bad people so they should not be helped**



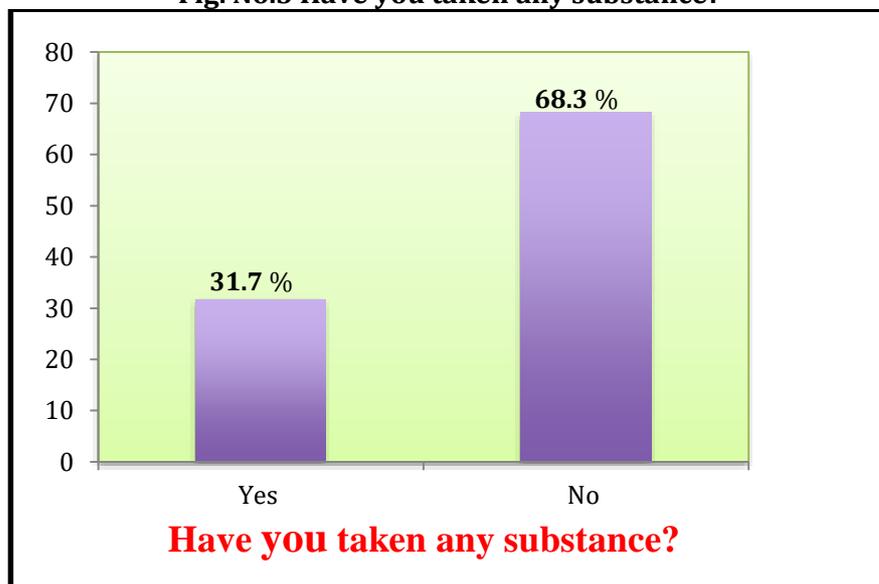
Among the respondents, 51.7 per cent said no, when asking about, ‘substance abuser are bad people they should not be help’, whereas another 48.3 per cent of the respondents said they don’t want to help drugs abusers because of their bad habit. Nearly half of the respondents have wrong perception that the drug abusers are bad people. Since they are deviated from the society for one reason or other they became addicted with substance abuse and that a person need counseling as well as guidance to come out from such illicit habit. During the time these substance abusers should be helped by others to quit the behavior.

As far as the statement ‘most of substance abuser doesn’t know their harmful effects’, more than half of the total respondents, 51.7 per cent of the respondents think that the substance

abusers know the harmful effect of drugs while another 48.3 per cent don't think substance abusers know the harmful effect of drugs. Around half of the respondents (48.3%) made wrong perception that substance abuser doesn't know about the harmful effects of the substances. Any substances go inside the human body automatically it will make some chemical reactions and this mentioned consequences might be known to all the substance abusers.

From the responses to the statement 'There is no treatment for addiction', 60.0 per cent of the respondent believes that there is treatment for addiction and the remaining 40.0 per cent don't think there is treatment for drug addiction. Two fifth of the respondents wrongly mentioned that there is no treatment available for drug addiction but in the real sense there are lot of medical treatments available and these treatments based on the level and physical condition of the drug addicts. Apart from medical treatment there are varieties of counseling programmes available to the drug addict to come out from the drug addiction.

**Fig. No.3 Have you taken any substance?**



When asking about the respondents whether they are using substances or not, 68.3 per cent of the respondents said they never use substance and another 31.7 percent of the respondents said they are using substance. Out of 60 respondents, 31.7 per cent of them are using substances and it is considered as very alarming in number and these respondents are in the age group of 18 to 30 years. When anyone started to use substance, it is quite difficult to come out from this deviant behavior and for this Government to work hard to curb the said behavior from this age group.

While considering the statement 'Does any of your friends take substance', among the total respondents, 66.7 per cent of the respondents said their friends are taking substance and remaining 33.3 per cent of the respondents said their friend never take substance. Compare to respondents, their friends are using substances more in number. From this table we may assume that the respondents involved in this substance due influencing of his friends.

When asking the respondents about whether their family members are taking substance or not, 85.0 per cent of the respondents said their family are not taking substance and remaining 15.0 per cent of the respondents are saying that their family members are using drugs.

**Fig. No.4 Do you have confidence to say no when somebody offers you any substance**

With regard to the statement 'Do you have confidence to say no when somebody offers you any substance', among the total respondents, 80.0 percent of the respondents reveal that they have confidence to say no when somebody offers substances and remaining 20.0 per cent said they cannot refuse when somebody offers any substances. It means that one fifth of the respondents have lack of confidence about themselves to stay away from the substance abusers and such type of lack of confidence sometime take them to land in substance abuse.

As far as the statement 'If someone takes substance at home there is more risk for such intake in family', among the total respondents, 75.0 per cent of the respondents said there is risk if someone in the family is taking any type of substance and remaining 25.0 per cent of the respondents don't think so. One fourth of the respondents wrongly perceived that there is no risk in the family if someone of the family members used to consume substances. Because when the tender age group people noticed that any one of the family members use substance and that would tempt the respondents to use the same.

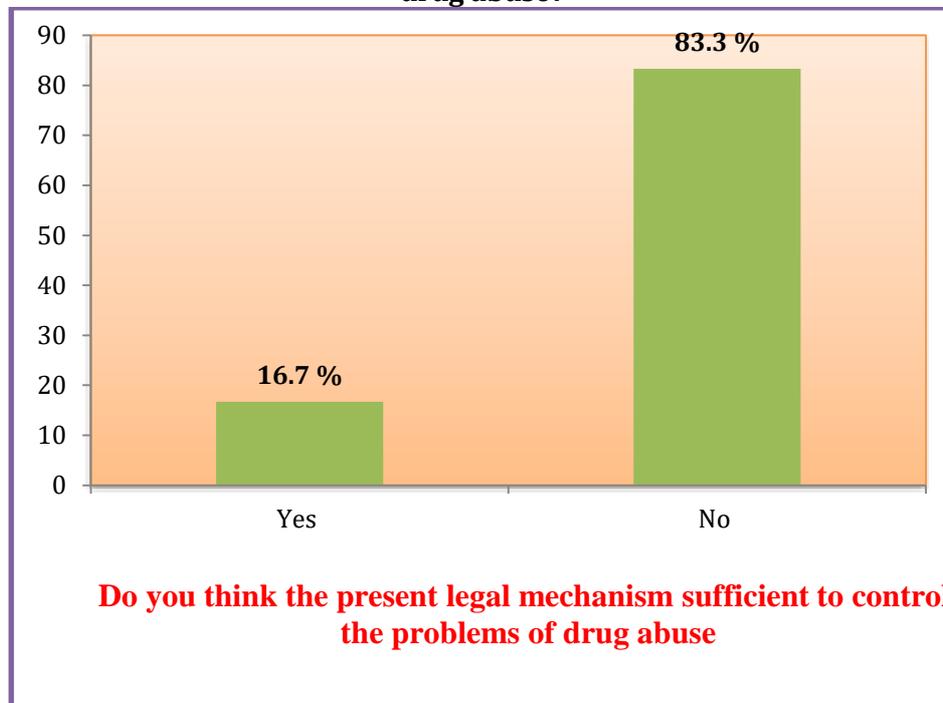
With regard to the satisfaction of the Government Programme, 81.3 per cent of the respondents are not satisfied with whatever the Government set Programme for controlling the drug abuse and remaining 18.3 per cent of the respondents are satisfied with the Government Programme. In other words more than four fifth of the respondents think that the government programmes are not good enough to control the drug abuse in Mizoram and they expect most stringent nature of rules and regulations from the government side to control the drug abuse.

With regard to the statement 'Will you discontinue the relationship with the drug user who is very close', out of the 60 respondents, 80.0 per cent of the respondents said they will not discontinue the relationship with their friend who is drug abuse and while 20.0 per cent of the respondents said they will discontinue the relationship with their friends who are drug abuse. For this statement 20 per cent of the respondents said that they would discontinue the relationship with the dearest person who use substances and the perception of these respondents might be wrong. Because instead of discontinue they have to continue the relationship with the drug user and while continuing the relationship they have to give counseling and such counseling might help the drug users to come out from the usage of drugs.

The respondents are also asked about whether the society is given a fair chance to the drug addicts to get involved, 58.3 per cent of the respondents said drug addicts are not given a

fair chance to get involved in our society and 41.7 per cent of the respondents replied our society is still giving a fair chance to the drug addicts to get involve in different activities.

**Fig. No.5 Do you think the present legal mechanism sufficient to control the problems of drug abuse?**



Among the total respondents, 83.3 per cent of the respondents mentioned that the present legal mechanism is not sufficient to control drug abuse and 16.7 per cent of the respondents accepted that the present legal mechanism is enough to control drug abuse. In other terms more than four fifth of the respondents thought that the present legal mechanism is not sufficient to control drug abuse and they think that the government must strengthen the present legal mechanism in order to control the drug abuse.

From the total respondents 81.7 per cent of the respondents disagreed when asking about youth taking substance only when they quarrel with parents and remaining 18.3 per cent agreed.

While considering the statement 'Do you think drug user among the youth is increasing nowadays', Out of the 60 respondents 98.3 per cent of the respondents responded that using of drugs is increasing nowadays among the youth and remaining 1.7 per cent of the respondents expressed not increasing at all.

The respondents also asked about whether one need to take substance at least once just to understand the causes of substance, 61.7 per cent doesn't think so and the remaining 38.3 per cent of the respondents replied one need to take substance just to know how it effects and causes damage. From the above inferences, nearly two fifth of the respondents have wrong perception that at least one time the youth must taste the substance in order to understand the causes of the damage made by the substance.

## Conclusion

The aim of the present study is to understand the knowledge and attitude of substance abuse among college students in Mizoram. The result indicate that 41 per cent of the respondents have wrong perception about substance abuse because they mentioned that such abuse reduce the stress level of consumers, nearly two-fifth of the respondents stated that small amount of substance abuse never damage the health condition of the abusers and it is also considered as wrong perception. Around two-third of the respondents wrongly revealed that drugs increase the pleasure of life and also two-fifth of the respondents (38 %) wrongly mentioned that the effects

of drugs are temporary. Because of this wrong perception nearly one-third of the respondents accepted that they are using drugs occasionally. The rates of usage of substances are alarming in nature. Therefore, the government, NGOs and Church leaders must take studious effort to create awareness among the college students and such awareness programme will help the students to free from the wrong perception about substances as well as its impact.

### **Limitation of the study**

The present study was conducted only among two college students and 30 respondents were selected from both colleges. In order to make generalization of the result the sample must represent all the colleges in Mizoram as well as the sample must be larger in size.

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