

## **DRUG ABUSE AMONG INDIAN YOUTH**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Drug abuse refers to the non-medical use of substances that alter a person's mental state in ways that are considered inappropriate, undesirable, and harmful by social norms and statute. This poses a threat to both the user and society. Commonly misused drugs include alcohol, heroin, cocaine, opium, and marijuana.

In general, the youth appear to be the primary focus of this drug epidemic and abuse. Youth drug misuse is mostly driven by curiosity, peer pressure, and easy access to drugs like cigarettes and alcohol. Friends are often persuaded to use drugs, particularly in senior high schools, when surrounded by negative influences. Alcohol, cigarettes, and other non-medicated narcotics are advertised in "naked" form on television and radio. These are dangerous medications that are marketed as performance-enhancing. These medications are marketed as laxatives, and locations where they can be purchased in large amounts are publicized. This availability of drugs to the youth and the society proves a cause and a cancer to society.

"Curiosity," it is said, "kills the cat." The young of today are extremely inquisitive and inquiring. They want to test the effectiveness of what they see and hear. Curiosity can sometimes lead to fatal consequences. Because of their curiosity, some people become addicted to narcotics. This study aims to examine the causes, impacts, and regulation of drug abuse, as well as its social and cultural implications.

**KEYWORDS** : Drug abuse, mental health, youth, drugs, dangerous

### **INTRODUCTION**

The drugs that are beneficial to humanity may also be the same drugs that are detrimental to mankind. It is of no argument that drugs are created to cure diseases and to alleviate human condition; however, people may misuse over-the-counter drugs and this is called drug abuse. It has become a social problem because it has afflicted the family, the economy and the community. Drug and alcohol abuse in our nation's teenagers has become a major public health issue. The government collects facts on substance abuse and reports on the statistics and they are staggering [1].

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Drug abuse refers to the non-medical use of substances that alter a person's mental state in ways that are considered inappropriate, undesirable, and harmful by social norms and statute. This poses a threat to the user's life and society as a whole.

Drug usage or misuse can include:

- Illegal substance use of anabolic steroids, club drugs, Cocaine, Heroin inhalants, Marijuana, Methamphetamines.
- Misusing prescription drugs, including opioids. This entails taking the medications in a different manner than the healthcare professional recommended. This includes:
  - i) Taking medication prescribed for someone else.
  - ii) Taking a higher dose than you should.
  - iii) Using the medication in a different way than prescribed.
  - iv) Using the drug for another reason, such as getting high.
- Misusing over-the-counter medications, such as using them for an unrelated purpose or in a way that is not recommended.

## **ADDICTION VS. DRUG ABUSE**

Drug abuse is when you use legal or illegal substances in ways you shouldn't. You might take more than the regular dose of pills or use someone else's prescription. You may abuse drugs to feel good, ease stress, or avoid reality. But usually, you're able to change your unhealthy habits or stop using altogether. Addiction is when you can't stop. Not when it puts your health in danger. Not when it causes financial, emotional, and other problems for you or your loved ones. That urge to get and use drugs can fill up every minute of the day, even if you want to quit [2].

## **YOUTH AFFECTED BY DRUG ABUSE**

The incidence of drug abuse among children and adolescents is higher than the general population. This is notably because youth is a time for experimentation and identity forming. Many street children use cheap drugs to cope with the daily cycles of sexual, physical and mental abuse or as recreation to escape a life of poverty. Heroin, Opium, Alcohol, Cannabis and Propoxyphene are the five most common drugs being abused by children in India [3].

In India an NGO survey revealed that 63.6 % of patients coming in for treatment were introduced to drugs at a young age below 15 years. According to another report 13.1% of the

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people involved in drug and substance abuse in India, are below 20 years. Heroin, Opium, Alcohol, Cannabis and Propoxyphene are the five most common drugs being abused by children in India. A survey shows that of all alcohol, cannabis and opium users 21%, 3% and 0.1% are below the age of eighteen. An emerging trend about child drug abusers is the use of a cocktail of drugs through injection, and often sharing the same needle, which increases their risk of HIV infection. Overall 0.4% and 4.6% of total treatment seekers in various states were children [3].

The difficulty in India is that there are no drug misuse awareness programs in schools or for youngsters outside of school. India does not have a substance abuse policy. There is also a high rate of charging children under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act of 1985. Children who occasionally have access to high-quality medications will employ volatile compounds readily available in corner stores, such as cough syrups, pain treatment ointments, glue, paint, gasoline, and cleaning fluid. There are few to no health centers that address kid substance addiction issues, particularly in rural areas. Tobacco usage is a big concern among children. In India, tobacco addiction affects 20 million children per year, or over 55,000 children per day. The figure is startling when contrasted to the 3000 new child smokers in the United States per day.

Drug abuse continues to emerge as a strategy among youth to cope with the problems of unemployment, neglect, violence and sexual abuse. At the same time, there is considerable abuse of drugs among socially integrated young people, in particular in the industrialized world. This may be attributed in part to the fact that significant portions of India's youth population are being exposed to a culture that appears to be more tolerant towards the use of drugs.

### **Why are drugs especially dangerous for young people?**

Young people's brains are growing and developing until they are in their mid-20's. This is especially true of the prefrontal cortex, which is used to make decisions. Taking drugs when young can interfere with developmental processes occurring in the brain. It can also affect their decision-making. They may be more likely to do risky things, such as unsafe sex and dangerous driving [4].

The earlier young people start using drugs, the greater their chances of continuing to use them and become addicted later in life. Taking drugs when you are young can contribute to the development of adult health problems, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, and sleep disorders [4].

## **Which drugs are most commonly used by young people?**

The drugs that are most commonly used by young people are alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana. Recently, more young people have started vaping tobacco and marijuana. There is still a lot we don't know about the dangers of vaping. Some people have unexpectedly gotten very ill or have even died after vaping. Because of this, young people should stay away from vaping.

## **CAUSES OF DRUG ABUSE**

There are an extensive number of causes that may contribute to the onset of drug abuse among adolescents. Herein, selected causes are mentioned below:

1. **Social Aspect** - Social factors that contribute to increased risk for adolescent substance use include deviant peer relationships, popularity, bullying, and association with gangs. Social influences and familial influences are often present simultaneously. This interaction creates a complex system of risk factors that predicts adolescent substance use, which is important to take into consideration [4].
2. **Familial Aspect** - Familial risk factors include childhood maltreatment (including abuse and neglect), parental or familial substance abuse, marital status of parents, level of parental education, parent-child relationships, familial socioeconomic status, and child perception that parents approve of their substance use. Child maltreatment has been classified for the purpose of this paper as a familial factor, The federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) defines maltreatment as child abuse or neglect, which encompasses any act or lack of an act by a child's caretaker that results in physical or emotional harm. Childhood maltreatment, including physical abuse and neglect, has been linked to increased risk for adolescent substance use, with one study reporting 29% of children who experienced maltreatment participating in some level of substance use and another reporting 16% of maltreated children abusing substances [5].
3. **Peer Pressure** - Youth mingle with various types of people, also known as friends. Through the pressure of these friends, a youngster develops a taste for these substances, and once this is done, they continue to consume them and become addicted to them in the long term.
4. **Depression** - another major contributing factor to drug misuse. When some circumstances happen to someone that are deemed particularly sad and demoralizing, the

individual begins to examine the best approach to become joyful again, which leads to the usage of hard drugs. This eventually evolves into a habit, resulting in drug abuse.

Another important factor of drug misuse is claimed to be high young unemployment rates. Furthermore, drug abuse can be defined as youngsters failing to adhere to the authorized dosage and continuing to use a specific drug for an extended period of time without doctor consent. This type of abuse is related to soft substances.

## **EFFECTS OF DRUG ABUSE**

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

**Physical health problems:** Drug abuse can damage almost every organ and system in the body, leading to a wide range of health problems, including:

- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Liver damage
- Kidney damage
- Lung disease
- Cancer
- Infectious diseases, such as HIV/AIDS and hepatitis

**Mental health problems:** Drug use and other mental illnesses often coexist. In some cases, mental disorders such as anxiety, depression, or schizophrenia may come before addiction. In other cases, drug use may trigger or worsen those mental health conditions, particularly in people with specific vulnerabilities [6].

Some people with disorders like anxiety or depression may use drugs in an attempt to alleviate psychiatric symptoms. This may exacerbate their mental disorder in the long run, as well as increase the risk of developing addiction. Treatment for all conditions should happen concurrently [7].

**Social problems:** Drug abuse can damage relationships, lead to financial problems, and increase the risk of crime and violence.

**Financial Effect:** The person addicted to drugs tends to spend more money on the purchase of these drugs. This can make the taker go bankrupt or start searching for money by all means. This will eventually increase the problem of the taker.

Additionally, drug abuse can have an impact on the following:

**Families:** Drug abuse can tear families apart, affecting children, spouses, and other loved ones.

**Communities:** Drug abuse can contribute to crime, violence, and other social problems.

**Workplace:** Drug abuse can lead to job loss, decreased productivity, and increased healthcare costs for employers.

## **REMEDIES / SOLUTIONS TO DRUG ABUSE**

- i. Parents should monitor the kind of friends their children have and guide them against bad company.
- ii. Rehabilitation of the affected persons.
- iii. Teaching the bad effects of drug abuse in schools.
- iv. Continuous campaign against the use of hard drugs at the federal, state and local levels.
- v. Consent of a doctor should be sought before a prolonged taking of a particular soft drug.

The Government is taking a sustained and coordinated action for arresting the problem of substance abuse among the youth. This includes:

- i. Launching of *Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan (NMBA)* in 272 most vulnerable districts under which a massive community outreach is being done with the help of about 8000 youth volunteers. More than 44 Lakh youth have been reached out under the *Abhiyaan* [8].
- ii. Maintaining of (364) *Integrated Rehabilitation Centres for Addicts (IRCA)*s not only for treating the drug victims but to provide services of preventive education, awareness generation, motivational counseling, detoxification/de-addiction, aftercare and reintegration into the social mainstream [8].
- iii. Maintaining of (54) *Community based Peer led Intervention (CPLI)* Centres with focus on vulnerable and at risk children and adolescents. Under this, peer educators engage children for awareness generation and life skill activities [8].

iv. Setting up and maintaining of (87) Outreach and Drop In Centres (ODICs) to provide safe and secure space for substance users, with provision of screening, assessment and counseling and thereafter provide referral and linkage to treatment and rehabilitation services for substance dependence [8].

**The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, (NDPS) 1985:** It prohibits a person from producing, possessing, selling, purchasing, transporting, storing, and/or consuming any narcotic drug or psychotropic substance.

- The NDPS Act has since been amended thrice – in 1988, 2001 and 2014.
- The Act extends to the whole of India and it applies also to all Indian citizens outside India and to all persons on ships and aircraft registered in India.

### **International Treaties and Conventions to Combat Drug Menace:**

A comprehensive strategy involving specific programs to bring about an overall reduction in use of drugs has been evolved by various government agencies and NGOs and is further supplemented by measures like education and counseling. India has bilateral agreements on drug trafficking with 13 countries, including Pakistan and Burma. Prior to 1999, extradition between India and the United States occurred under the auspices of a 1931 treaty signed by the United States and the United Kingdom, which was made applicable to India in 1942. However, a new extradition treaty between India and the United States entered into force in July 1999. A Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty was signed by India and the United States in October 2001.

India also is signatory to the following treaties and conventions: 1961 U.N. Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1971 U.N. Convention on Psychotropic Substances, 1988 U.N. Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 2000 Transnational Crime Convention [1].

### **CONCLUSION**

Drug abuse is when you use legal or illegal substances in ways you shouldn't. You might take more than the regular dose of pills or use someone else's prescription. You may abuse drugs to feel good, ease stress or avoid reality. Drug abuse has become a major social problem. The incidence of drug abuse among children and adolescents is higher than the general population. Youth use drugs due to peer Pressure, physical and mental abuse, depression etc. Heroin, Opium, Alcohol, Cannabis and Propoxyphene are the five most common drugs being abused by adolescents in India. In India an NGO survey revealed that 63.6% of patients coming in for

treatment were introduced to drugs at a young age below 15 years. A survey shows that of all alcohol, cannabis and opium users 21%, 3% and 0.1% are below the age of 18. Drugs are especially dangerous for youth as their brains are growing and developing. This is especially true of the prefrontal cortex, which is used to make decisions. Taking drugs at a young age has many negative effects including academic difficulties, health-related problems including mental health, poor peer relations etc. The government launched NMBA and is maintaining IRCAs. Drug abuse is preventable. Teachers, parents, and health care providers have crucial roles in educating Youth and preventing it.

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