

**A STUDY ON KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE OF ADOLESCENTS ABOUT
SUBSTANCE ABUSE****Chaube D.* and Rawat A.²**¹Senior Resident, Department of Pediatrics, M.G.M Medical College, Indore.²Professor, Department of Pediatrics H.I.M.S, Dehradun.***Corresponding Author: Chaube D.**

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Substance abuse is now a global problem with young adolescent being the easy targets. The aim of the current study is to evaluate the knowledge and attitude of boy students toward substance abuse in small town and nearby villages situated in north India. Thus, the interventions, which are effective for adolescents in the specific area, could be identified. **Methods:** This study was carried out in 2017 in Roorkee town and nearby villages in state of Uttarakhand, India. The sample of study consisted of 450 boy students in higher secondary schools. Substance abuse is negligible in girl students in the study area. Inclusion of girl students would have lead to mistaken conclusions about substance abuse in student's category. The research tool was a questionnaire designed on the basis of UN guidelines, which were filled out by the students. The data obtained was analyzed for understanding knowledge and attitude of students. **Results:** Among 450 students who filled out the questionnaire, 55.6% were from urban area and 44.4% from rural area. Knowledge level of boy students about substance abuse and particularly their adverse effects is high and similar both in urban and rural areas. Friends and teachers are considered as most common source of knowledge. Seeking pleasure and family conflict are the single important factor for substance abuse by students in urban area whereas substance abuse in family is the main factor for substance abuse by students in rural area. 51.4% of the students in rural area and 35.4 % of students in urban area intended to quit but did not try. 34.2% of rural students and 43.7% of students in urban area had quit the habit but again started. **Conclusion:** With respect to the results obtained, promoting the knowledge and modifying the attitude of students, and increasing their self-confidence in schools can play an important role in decreasing substance abuse in students.

KEYWORDS: Substance Abuse, Students, Age 14-18 Years, Knowledge, Attitude.**INTRODUCTION**

Substance abuse (sometimes referred to as "drug abuse") typically means that a person is using drugs in a way that is harmful to personal health and well-being. United Nation's World Drug Report for the year 2018 uses the term 'substance use' instead of substance abuse. The report characterizes adolescence as a time of vulnerability to different influences when adolescents initiate various behaviors, which may include substance use¹. Most research suggests that early (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]

Knowledge refers to the awareness or familiarizing of substance abusers regarding ill-effects of substance abuse. Attitude refers to the way of thinking or feeling about ill effects of substance abuse.

Today, there is no part of the world that is free from the curse of drug addiction. Drug abuse and drug dependence have become major concerns of today's

world. According to a report of the World Health Organization, there were 200 million of drug addicts throughout the world in 2005. India too is caught in this vicious circle of drug abuse, and the numbers of drug addicts are increasing day by day.

The common drugs of abuse among adolescents in India are tobacco and alcohol but use of illicit and stronger drugs such as cannabis, opium, and even intravenous use of drugs such as heroin have also been increasingly reported. According to the report of World Health Organization, tobacco – attributable mortality in India is estimated to increase from 1% of total mortality in 1990 to 13% by 2020.^[2]

Knowledge and attitude of the individual toward the drug and the drug effect is effective in its abuse. Another important factor in this respect is availability and nature of the substance. Some environmental factors that contribute to drug abuse are cultural factors, peer attitude toward drug abuse, parents' behavior, and regulations and policies which restrict access to the drugs. Adolescence is a

period of curiosity, experiencing, and seeking for personal identity and therefore adolescents are more susceptible to the environmental factors. Transition from childhood to adolescence is a delicate period. The adolescents may abuse substances due to various reasons. Some reasons to mention are lack of adequate knowledge about the harmful effects of the substances, incorrect attitude toward drugs and addiction, presenting personal independence, peer pressure, satisfying the curiosity, low levels of self-confidence, inability in maintaining inter-personal communications, and reducing stress. In general, a combination of personal and familial factors, and the conditions of school and the society play an important role in substance abuse in adolescents. Presence of a substance abuser in the family, the ways the family controls the adolescent, inter-personal communications in the family, level of emotional dependence between parents and children, and the expectations of parents from their children are factors effective on substance abuse by adolescents. Moreover, the type of experience of an adolescent from the school is equally important in this regard.^[3]

It has been demonstrated in several studies that substance abuse is influenced by the knowledge and attitude toward the substance. In different countries, some interventions have been carried out in the society to modify the knowledge and attitude of the people. The objective of these studies was prevention of initiation of drug abuse. Various studies have focused on juvenile and adolescents, because these groups are more susceptible to social harms due to their lower level of knowledge.^[4]

The aim of the current study is evaluation of knowledge and attitude of adolescents in terrain belt of Uttarakhand (Roorkee and nearby village) toward addictive substances. The results could be used in identification of risky behaviors and designing and applying appropriate programs to promote the knowledge and attitude of this age group.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The cross-sectional study has been carried out in the year 2017 in Roorkee town and villages within Roorkee Tehsil in the state of Uttarakhand in India. Sample size consisted of 450 students in class VIII to XII and in age range of 14 to 18 years.

Inclusion criteria for the sampling of students consisted of;

- Students registered and pursuing their study in the identified schools and falling in the range 14 to 18 years
- Only boy students were included in the survey.
- Higher Secondary Schools situated within Roorkee town and in villages (sufficiently away from Roorkee town were included in the study.

Exclusion criteria for the sampling consisted of

- Questionnaires containing incomplete, inappropriate or inconsistent responses were rejected.
- Girl students were excluded from sampling because

substance abuse in the girl adolescents has been traditionally negligible and their inclusion would have provided mistaken statistics about substance abuse in adolescents.

Research Tool

The research tool for this study was an author-devised questionnaire, designed to evaluate the knowledge and attitude of boy students in study area. WHO guidelines on student drug-use surveys has been reviewed⁵. Based on this review, a simple questionnaire was designed by the author in Hindi language so that it could be easily understood by the students. Verbal consent of the school teacher, principal and parents was taken for the proposed survey.

There can be so many factors which individually or in combination could be responsible for inclination to taking drugs. To avoid confusion, the students were asked to identify single most important factor for inclination towards substance abuse.

RESULT

After collecting questionnaires, some of the questionnaires were excluded considering the exclusion criteria, and 450 questionnaires were finally used for further analysis. Among these questionnaires, 250 (55.6%) questionnaires were filled out by students in higher secondary schools in Roorkee town. 200 (44.4%) questionnaires were filled by students in schools located in villages in Roorkee Tehsil. Results of data analysis are as given below.

Prevalence of Substance Abuse

Analysis of filled in questionnaires shows that 19.2% of the urban students and 17.5% of rural students are substance abusers (Table 1). Overall prevalence is 18.4% among the 450 responders.

Table. 1: Prevalence of substance abuse in rural and urban area.

Residence	Substance abuser No. (%)	Total No. (%)
Urban	48 (19.2)	250(100)
Rural	35 (17.5)	200(100)
Total	83(18.4)	450(100)

Single Important Factor for Inclination towards Substance Abuse

Students were asked to state single most important factor for drug abuse. Seeking pleasure and family conflict are the single important factor for substance abuse by students in urban area whereas substance abuse in family is the main reason in rural area (Table 2).

Table. 2: Major factor for inclination towards substance abuse.

Factor	Urban No.(%)	Rural No.(%)
Family conflict	12(25)	7(20.0)
Parents divorced	4(8.3)	3(8.5)
Substance abuser in family	9(18.8)	12(34.2)
Peer pressure	7(14.6)	4(11.4)
Seeking pleasure/Curiosity; drug being easily available	14(29.2)	8(22.8)
Other than above mentioned	2(4.2)	1(3.0)
Total	48(100)	35(100)

Reason for Continuation of substance Abuse

Students in urban area are continuing drug abuse due to habit/ craving and because the drug helps in relieving stress or elevating the mood. Students in rural area are using drug gave mixed response regarding single most important reason for continuation of drug abuse (Table 3).

Table. 3: Distribution of urban and rural users according to reasons for continuation.

Reason to continue	Urban No. (%)	Rural No. (%)
Habit/Craving	17(35.4)	10(28.6)
Time pass/Easily available	4(8.3)	10(28.6)
Stress reliever/ Mood elevator	14(29.2)	12(34.3)
Admiration/Acceptance by friends	11(22.9)	2(5.7)
Other than above mentioned	2(4.2)	1(2.8)
Total	48(100)	35(100)

Knowledge About the Adverse Effect of Substance Abuse: Students gave multiple response regarding their knowledge about the harmful effect of substance abuse. 87.5% of urban students and 82.8% of rural students knew that alcohol has harmful effect. 94.2% of rural students knew that tobacco is the most harmful (Table 4).

Table. 4: Knowledge about the adverse effect of substance use among urban and rural (Multiple response).

Substance	Urban { n=48} No.(%)	Rural {n=35} No. (%)
Alcohol	42(87.5)	29(82.8)
Tobacco	37(77.1)	33(94.2)
Cannabis	17(35.4)	24(68.5)
Inhalational	14(29.1)	5(14.2)

Source of Knowledge About the Adverse Effect of Substance Abuse: Students gave multiple response on source of knowledge. Students both in urban as well as in rural areas have got good knowledge about the harmful effects through various sources. Friends and teachers are

considered as most common source of knowledge about the adverse effect of substance abuse (Table 5).

Table. 5: Source of knowledge among the urban and rural about the harmful effect of substance use (multiple responses).

Knowledge source	Urban {n=48} No. (%)	Rural {n=35} No. (%)
Media (Print/Electronic)	37(77.1)	22(62.8)
Family member	29(60.4)	25(71.4)
Friends/Teachers	44(91.6)	29(82.8)
Don't Remember	13(27.1)	8(22.8)

Attitude Towards Quitting: Nearly half of the students in rural area (51.4%) and 35.4 % of students in urban area stated that they intended to quit but did not try. 34.2% of rural students and 43.7% of students in urban area had quit the habit but again started. It is interesting to note that 11% to 12 % of the students in urban and rural area wished to continue with the habit. A small percentage of students were uncertain whether to quit or continue with the habit (Table 6).

Table. 6: Attitude among urban and rural for quitting the substance use.

Attitude towards quitting substance use	Urban {n=48} No. (%)	Rural {n=35} No. (%)
Quit but again started	21(43.7)	12(34.2)
Wish to quit but not tried	17(35.4)	18(51.4)
Wish to continue	6(12.5)	4(11.4)
Do not know	4(8.3)	1(2.8)

DISCUSSION

In the present study only boy students have been considered. Substance abuse is negligible in girl students in the study area (Roorkee town and villages in Roorkee Tehsil) for a variety of social reasons. Inclusion of girl students would have decreased the percentage of boy students in same sample size leading to mistaken conclusions about substance abuse by students' category.

World Drug Report 2018¹ states that Club drugs Substances such as "ecstasy", methamphetamine, cocaine, ketamine, LSD and GHB are used by young people in high-income societies, originally in isolated "rave" scenes but later in settings ranging from college bars and house parties to concerts. In the present study use of such substances was found to be negligible in Roorkee town and villages.

The current study indicates that the knowledge level of boy students about substance abuse and particularly their adverse effects is high and similar both in urban and rural areas.

In a study carried out in the Netherlands, it was shown that the knowledge of students about tobacco and cannabis was insufficient⁶. Whereas in the present study, most of the students had knowledge about tobacco and alcohol and its harmful effect. Therefore, it seems that holding continuous education courses in schools is an effective approach in prevention of drug abuse. In this way, the knowledge of students about drug abuse would be promoted. Success of such programs has been reported in some studies.

In a study of drug abuse in students in Iran⁷, several factors have been identified as the most important factors towards inclination to drug abuse such as parents' divorce, familial conflicts, seeking pleasure, adolescents' curiosity, availability of the drugs, peer pressure, low levels of self-confidence, psychological disorders, and strict parents. Several of these factors have cause-effect relation and therefore should not be treated as independent factors.

To avoid confusion, the students in the present study were asked to identify single most important factor for inclination towards substance abuse. Therefore in the present study students were asked to state single most important factor for drug abuse. Seeking pleasure and family conflict are the single important factor for substance abuse by students in urban area whereas substance abuse in family is the main reason in rural area.

CONCLUSION

Adolescence period has an important role in establishment of individuals' behaviors and schools have a great opportunities to influence the process. Thus, paying more attention to deliver trainings on risky and harmful behaviors and promotion of different skills of adolescents would elevate the students' knowledge level and modify their attitude toward drug abuse. These items along with enhancement of students' self-confidence would be considerably helpful in decreasing the prevalence of drug abuse among this age group, and consequently in the society

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author has no conflicts of interest.

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