



BEHIND THE CURTAIN OF FRESHMAN COLLEGE YEAR: INVESTIGATING DRUG ABUSE AND ADDICTION IN GREATER NOIDA"

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Abstract

Background: The transition into college life is often accompanied by new experiences, freedoms, and challenges. Among these, substance abuse emerges as a growing concern, particularly among freshmen who may be vulnerable to peer pressure, academic stress, and social experimentation. In India, there is limited data on the prevalence and patterns of drug abuse among first-year college students, especially in urban hubs like Greater Noida.

Aim: The present study aims to investigate the patterns, prevalence, and influencing factors of drug abuse and addiction among freshman college students in Greater Noida, with an emphasis on polydrug use, peer and family influence, and physical and psychological consequences.

Method: A cross-sectional study was conducted using the Drug Abuse Screening Test (DAST-10) among a sample of freshman students from various colleges in Greater Noida. Participants were assessed through a structured questionnaire that examined the frequency and type of substance use, contributing factors such as peer pressure and family history, and symptoms related to drug dependency including blackouts, withdrawal, and academic impact.

Conclusion: The findings reveal a concerning level of drug use among first-year college students, with a notable prevalence of polydrug use. Peer influence was found to be a major contributing factor, along with lack of family supervision. Physical symptoms like blackouts and withdrawal effects were reported by a significant portion of respondents. These results highlight the urgent need for targeted intervention strategies, awareness programs, and counselling support within educational institutions to mitigate the growing issue of substance abuse at the freshman level.

Key Words -Drug Abuse, Drug Abusers, Drug Dependent, Drug Abuse Patterns

Introduction

A drug is a chemical substance whether or not obtained from natural sources which is taken for the pleasant effects it produces. The word “drug” relates not to any particular kind but to various kinds of narcotic substances, which may differ from one another in its effects. The international convention on Drugs to which India is a signatory has classified drugs into two categories. Such as Narcotic drugs and Psychotropic substances. Drug abuse means taking a drug to reasons other than medical and amount strength, frequency or manner that damages the physical and mental functioning. The researcher states that the uses of drug damage the physical and mental health of the individual and also kills him. It ruins their family and social values. The main drugs of abuse in India are cannabis, heroin and opium. Mostly they are used for cultural and traditional reasons, because of easily availability and local cultivation. However, there is reported increase in abuse of prescription drugs such as morphine, ephedrine-morphine, diazepam and codeine-based cough syrups. The majority of addicts are between 15 to 35 years of age and it is the most productive age group of the country. There is also increasing abuse of drugs and psychotropic substances among out of school

and street children. With every addict, the life of a whole family is affected. Drug addiction is the compulsive use of psychoactive drugs, to the point where the user seems to have no effective choice but to continue usage.

This research paper seeks to offer a complete assessment of Drug Abuse amongst college freshmen, drawing on a synthesis of empirical research, theoretical frameworks, and clinical insights. by means of delving into the modern literature and totally evidence-based practices, this paper aims to clarify the diverse dimensions of Drug Abuse and Addiction, which include its effect on academics, ethical consequences, family problems, social exclusion, economical toll and furthermore the harm to the body. It's going to explore the differential reports of Drug Abuse and Addiction throughout numerous cultural contexts, socioeconomic strata, and healthcare systems, highlighting the want for tailor-made interventions and support mechanisms.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Review of Literature

Drug abuse poses a significant challenge in India, where the absence of a comprehensive monitoring system exacerbates the issue. Despite the lack of awareness among the general population, studies have shed light on

various aspects of drug abuse among specific demographics.

A study conducted by McCabe et al. (2014) examined prescription drug use trends among college students from 2003 to 2013, revealing a concerning increase in non-medical use of prescription medications. This highlights the pressing need to address prescription drug abuse as a public health concern.

Mallett et al. (2011) utilized latent class analysis to identify distinct patterns of substance usage among college students. Their findings underscored the diversity of substance abuse behaviors within this demographic, emphasizing the need for tailored intervention strategies.

Research by Arria et al. (2013) investigated the impact of marijuana use on academic performance among college students. The study revealed detrimental effects, including poorer academic outcomes and increased likelihood of class absenteeism, highlighting the importance of addressing marijuana use to support academic achievement.

A report by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports indicated that 40% of Indian youth have fallen prey to drugs, indicating the widespread nature of the issue within the population.

Genetic predisposition and psychosocial stressors have been identified as significant contributors to drug addiction. Studies have shown that factors such as academic stress, economic hardship, and lack of social support can increase the risk of developing drug addiction.

Manifestations of drug abuse encompass a range of signs and symptoms, including altered heart rates, mental health disorders such as depression and anxiety, cognitive impairment, and impaired awareness. Understanding these manifestations is crucial for early detection and intervention.

The Monitoring the Future study (Miech et al., 2019) highlights the prevalence of illicit drug use among young adults aged 18 to 25, emphasizing the need for targeted prevention and intervention efforts to address substance abuse among this demographic.

3. OBJECTIVES

- To assess the prevalence and extent of drug abuse among college freshmen students.
- To explore the role of peer groups in the initiation of drug abuse among college freshmen.

4. METHODOLOGY:

In this study, 60 freshmen college students from Greater Noida were randomly selected, representing various universities and disciplines. They were assured of confidentiality and asked to fill out the Drug Abuse Screening Test (DAST-10) questionnaire via Google Forms. The DAST-10 comprises 10 items rated on a 2-point Likert scale, with scores ranging from 0 to 10 indicating different levels of drug dependency.

High scores on the DAST-10 suggest a greater likelihood of drug-related issues, necessitating further assessment by a professional. The internal consistency of the DAST-10, measured using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, ranged from approximately 0.70 to 0.90 in previous studies, indicating a moderate to high degree of correlation among its items. Moreover, test-retest reliability, assessed using correlation techniques like Pearson's correlation coefficient and the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC), yielded values between 0.70 and 0.90, indicating moderate to high levels of score stability over time.

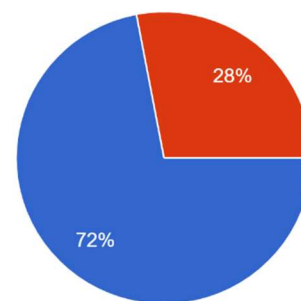
FIGURE 1 – Link of questionnaire shared through WhatsApp

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

5.1 People using drugs for non-medical reasons:

The survey reveals a concerning trend of drug use among Greater Noida's freshmen college students, with a significant portion reporting non-medical drug use. This highlights the prevalence of recreational or non-prescribed drug use within this demographic.

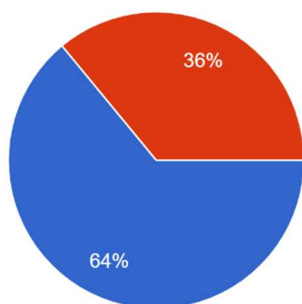
Furthermore, the data sheds light on the specific substances being used, with common sedatives like phenobarbital, Nembutal, and secobarbital emerging as popular choices among freshmen. Research suggests various reasons behind prescription drug misuse, including academic enhancement and recreational use.



These findings emphasize the urgent need for targeted interventions and prevention

strategies tailored to college freshmen. By raising awareness about the risks associated with drug misuse and providing support services, colleges can mitigate the harmful effects of substance abuse and promote healthier behaviours among students.

5.2 People abusing more than one drug at a time:



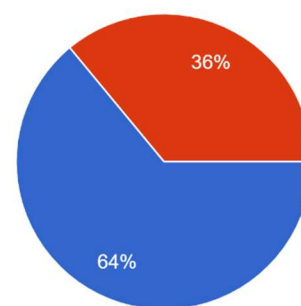
The chart illustrates the percentage of the population engaged in polydrug use, where individuals abuse more than one drug simultaneously. Notably, a significant portion of the population falls into this category, indicating a prevalent pattern of polydrug use among substance abusers.

Research by Palamar and Le (2019) corroborates this finding, highlighting the commonality of polydrug use among substance abusers. For instance, among MDMA (ecstasy) users, over half reported concurrent use of other substances such as cannabis, cocaine, or prescription drugs. This

demonstrates the widespread nature of polydrug use and its implications for public health.

Additionally, the chart reflects the proportion of individuals who abuse a single drug and those who do not abuse drugs at all. Understanding the prevalence of polydrug use and its associated risks is essential for developing targeted interventions and prevention strategies to address substance abuse within the population. By targeting individuals engaged in polydrug use and providing comprehensive support services, stakeholders can mitigate the adverse effects of substance abuse and promote healthier behaviors among the population.

5.3 Impact of Family Members' Awareness of Drug Abuse:



The chart reveals that 64% of family members have observed changes in the behavior of substance abusers and have communicated their concerns to them. This

highlights the significant role that family members play in recognizing and addressing substance abuse issues among their loved ones.

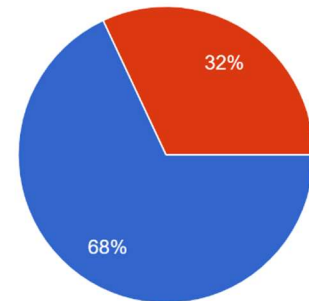
Research by Orford et al. (2013) indicates that family members of individuals with substance abuse disorders often experience feelings of overwhelm, frustration, and isolation due to the disruptive behaviors associated with addiction. Despite these challenges, family members are crucial in providing support and intervention for individuals struggling with substance abuse.

Interestingly, in many cases of freshmen students abusing drugs, families may be unaware of their child's substance abuse due to their absence from home. Grant et al. (2017) suggest that caregivers of individuals with substance use disorders may face physical exhaustion, social isolation, and financial difficulties as they navigate the complexities of supporting their loved one's recovery while maintaining their own well-being.

These findings underscore the importance of involving family members in interventions targeting substance abuse among college freshmen. By fostering open communication and providing support services for both substance abusers and their families,

stakeholders can enhance the effectiveness of interventions and promote healthier outcomes for all involved parties.

5.4 Impact of Drug Abuse on Family Relationships:

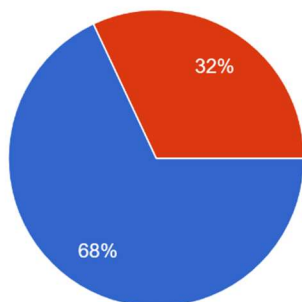


The chart indicates that 68% of the sample population admitted to neglecting their family members due to drug abuse. This finding underscores the significant strain that substance abuse can place on family relationships, resulting in feelings of neglect and abandonment among loved ones.

Research by Copello et al. (2017) supports this observation, suggesting that individuals with substance abuse disorders often prioritize obtaining and using drugs over fulfilling their familial responsibilities. Consequently, family members may experience emotional distress and feelings of abandonment as a result of their loved one's substance abuse.

These findings highlight the urgent need for interventions that address not only the individual's substance abuse but also the broader impact on family dynamics. By providing support services for both substance abusers and their families, stakeholders can help mitigate the negative consequences of drug abuse on familial relationships and promote healing and reconciliation within affected households.

5.5 Individuals who have had "blackouts" or "flashbacks" as a result of drug use:



The chart illustrates that 68% of the population reported experiencing physical symptoms such as blackouts and flashbacks, while 32% did not report any physical symptoms. These findings shed light on the prevalence of physical manifestations associated with drug abuse among the sampled population.

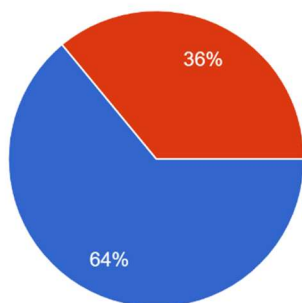
Blackouts, characterized by periods of unconsciousness during which individuals

are unable to recall events that occurred while intoxicated, were reported by a significant portion of the population. Additionally, flashbacks, defined as sudden and involuntary re-experiencing of memories related to drug abuse, were also reported.

Research by White et al. (2019) highlights alcohol as a common substance associated with blackouts, particularly when consumed in large quantities or in combination with other drugs. Blackouts are thought to result from disruptions in memory encoding and retrieval processes due to alcohol's effects on neurotransmitter systems, particularly those involved in memory consolidation (NIAAA, 2020).

These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions aimed at addressing the physical consequences of drug abuse, such as blackouts and flashbacks. By raising awareness about the risks associated with substance abuse and providing support services for affected individuals, stakeholders can mitigate the adverse effects of drug abuse on physical health and well-being.

5.6 Involvement in Illegal Activities to Obtain Drugs:



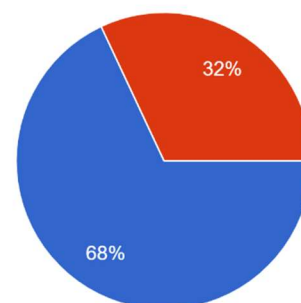
The chart reveals that 64% of the population resorted to illegal activities to acquire the drugs they abuse. These activities encompass various behaviors, including buying drugs, trading belongings, and engaging in theft or robbery, underscoring the extent to which individuals may go to feed their substance dependence.

Studies by Chakravarthy et al. (2018) have shown that individuals with substance use disorders are more prone to engaging in property crimes as a means to obtain money or valuables for purchasing drugs, often to alleviate withdrawal symptoms. Additionally, research by Fazel et al. (2018) suggests that certain substances, particularly alcohol and stimulants like cocaine and methamphetamine, are frequently associated with violent behaviors, which may be exacerbated by drug-induced aggression or impaired judgment.

Furthermore, studies by Shannon et al. (2019) emphasize the cyclical relationship

between substance abuse and criminal behavior, where involvement in one reinforces the other in a self-perpetuating cycle. This highlights the complex interplay between drug abuse and illegal activities, necessitating comprehensive interventions that address both substance dependence and associated criminal behaviors.

5.7 Experience of Withdrawal Symptoms:



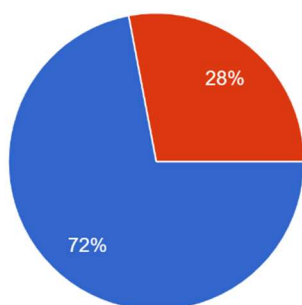
The chart indicates that 68% of the sample population experienced withdrawal symptoms upon discontinuing drug use. Withdrawal symptoms, including shivering, fever, and mood fluctuations, are common among individuals taking a break from or quitting drugs.

Research by McGregor et al. (2005) delves into the neurochemical and behavioral changes associated with stimulant withdrawal and explores potential pharmacological interventions for managing

withdrawal symptoms. This highlights the significance of understanding and addressing withdrawal symptoms as part of the recovery process for individuals struggling with drug dependence.

These findings underscore the importance of providing support and resources for individuals experiencing withdrawal symptoms, as well as the need for comprehensive interventions that address both the physiological and psychological aspects of drug dependence.

5.8 Influence of Peer Groups on Drug Abuse:

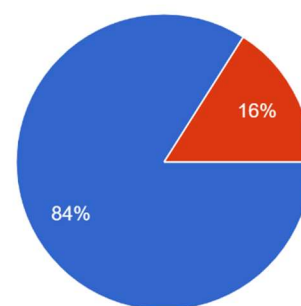


The chart reveals that 72% of the sample population acknowledges the significant role played by peer groups in their drug abuse and addiction. This finding underscores the profound influence of peer relationships on substance use behaviors.

Research by Borsari and Carey (2001) indicates that college students are more likely to engage in heavy drinking if they perceive their peers to be supportive of alcohol use. Similarly, a study by Simons-Morton et al. (2016) demonstrates that adolescents are more likely to initiate substance use if their peers endorse or engage in similar behaviors.

These findings highlight the importance of addressing peer influence in substance abuse prevention and intervention efforts. By promoting positive peer relationships and providing education on resisting peer pressure, stakeholders can mitigate the influence of peer groups on drug abuse behaviors among vulnerable populations.

5.9 Perception of Drug Exposure Timing:



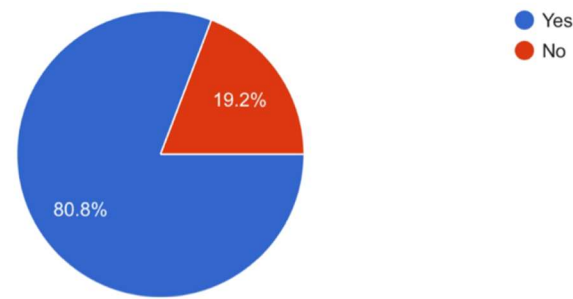
The chart indicates that the majority of the population believes they would have handled drugs better if they were exposed to them at a later stage in life. This insight suggests that delaying exposure to drugs may have helped

individuals exercise greater caution or avoid substance abuse altogether.

Research by Chen et al. (2016) supports this notion, highlighting adolescence as a critical period for the onset of substance experimentation. Many individuals try drugs for the first time during this developmental stage, underscoring the importance of preventive interventions targeting youth and adolescents.

These findings emphasize the significance of early intervention and education programs aimed at delaying drug exposure and promoting healthy decision-making skills among young people. By empowering individuals with the knowledge and skills to make informed choices regarding substance use, stakeholders can mitigate the risks associated with early drug experimentation and reduce the likelihood of substance abuse in later life.

5.10 Perception of Ability to Stop Drug Abuse:



The research indicates that 80.8% of individuals believe they can stop drug abuse whenever they want without any difficulty, medical support, or additional medication. This perception suggests a high level of confidence in their ability to overcome substance abuse independently.

"Natural Recovery: The Resolution of Alcohol Problems without Treatment" by Holder et al. (1994) explored the phenomenon of natural recovery from alcohol problems among individuals who had previously met criteria for alcohol abuse or dependence. This study provides valuable insights into the potential for individuals to achieve recovery from substance abuse without formal treatment interventions.

These findings underscore the importance of promoting self-efficacy and empowering individuals to take control of their recovery journey. While professional support and interventions can be beneficial, the belief in one's own ability to overcome substance

abuse independently can serve as a motivating factor in achieving lasting recovery.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings from this study underscore the significant impact of drug abuse and addiction on freshmen college students and their families. The prevalence of drug abuse for non-medical reasons and polydrug use among students highlights the complex health risks associated with substance misuse, including physical health complications, mental health disorders, addiction, and cognitive impairment. Moreover, the observed neglect of family and friends by individuals struggling with drug abuse emphasizes the interpersonal and emotional toll of addiction on relationships. Addressing drug abuse and addiction requires a multifaceted approach that encompasses evidence-based interventions, support systems, and collaborative efforts from healthcare providers, policymakers, families, and communities. By prioritizing mental health, reducing stigma, and improving access to comprehensive care, we can create a society where youth thrive without falling victim to the traps of drug abuse and addiction. Continued research and advocacy are essential for advancing our understanding

of drug abuse and promoting holistic well-being for all individuals. Together, let us work towards a future where mental health is valued, protected, and prioritized for the betterment of our youth and society as a whole.

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