



DRUG ABUSE AMONG SCHOOL CHILDREN—A NEED FOR COUNSELLING

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Abstract

Substance abuse is one of the serious problems affecting youth in the world. It may occur at any age but the most affected are the adolescents. The increasing problem of substance abuse and dependence has drawn both public and scientific attention to be focused. The introduction of various substances like Gutka, Pan-masala, Zarda etc. which have addictive nature has increased. Various factors attract an adolescent towards substance abuse such as curiosity, enjoyment, peer pressure and the use of substance by the elders and parents. Proper counseling is required to make them understand the ill-effects of the substance on their health, the society and their social image. Only then we may be able to guide our youth and protect them from falling into the cruel hands of substances.

Keywords- *Adolescence, Substance abuse, Addiction.*

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a period of transition from childhood to adulthood and this critical development is marked with several physical, psychological and social changes. It is a time of experimentation, exploration, curiosity and identity search. Adolescents are faced with a huge task of establishing a sense of identity. All of the developmental changes that adolescents experience prepare them to experiment with new behaviors, This experimentation results in risk taking which is a normal part of adolescent development (Sue, et al, 2009). Engaging in risk-taking behavior helps them to shape their identities, try out their new decision-making skills and gain peer acceptance and respect (Ponyon, 2009).

Unfortunately, some of the risk that adolescents pursue may pose a real threat to their health and well-being. These include pregnancy, cigarette smoking, alcohol consumption and drug and substance abuse. Substance abuse is one of the serious problems affecting the adolescents. The increasing problem of substance and dependence has drawn both public and scientific attention to be focused. It points towards the maladaptive patterns of adjustment to life's demands and moral deficiencies in the adolescents. These substances used apparently are Pan masala, Zarda, Gutka, Fluid-whitener, Cough syrups, Iodex etc.

A drug refers to a substance that could bring a change in the biological function through its chemical actions (Okoye, 2001). It is also considered as a substance that modifies perceptions, cognition, mood, behavior and general body functions (Balogun, 2006). Odejide (2000) warned that drug and substance abusers who exhibit symptoms of stress, anxiety, depression, behavior changes and fatigue should be treated by medical experts and counselors to save them from deadly diseases.

Substance abuse is harmful not only to the individual but also to the society at large. When substances are taken for reasons other than medical, in an amount, strength, frequency or manner that damages the physical or mental functioning of an individual, it is called Substance abuse. India is certainly facing a serious problem on account of Substance dependency. School going adolescents are attracted to Substances because of thrill, enjoyment, to escape from unhappy, harsh parental values, inharmonious home atmosphere and other negative factors. Adolescents who abuse substances typically do more poorly in school and solving family problems. Deviance and low self-esteem appear to explain this relationship. Parents and peers influence adolescents by acting as role models (Taylor, 2003). On the other hand, parental deprivation due to deaths, divorces, separation or discord has also been strongly associated with drug abuse (Odejide, 1997).

Addiction to substances is spreading everywhere like an epidemic and eroding social and cultural aspect of society by becoming a root cause of poor academic performance, truancy and ill-health. A regular counseling of adolescents is therefore required so as to save them from this addiction and to help them lead a healthy and a prosperous life.

OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the study are –

1. To study the socio-economic profile of the high school going children addicted to substance abuse.
2. To study the family background and the impact of the substance abused by the students.
3. To study the type of substances abused by the students.



METHODOLOGY

Sample for the study

Two rural schools of Chandigarh were selected for the study. The name is not disclosed due to confidential matters. After establishing rapport with the students 100 students (88 boys and 12 girls) which were abusing the substances were selected for the study.

Tools used for data collection

An interview method was used for collection of the data. The interview schedule was made by the researcher herself. It consisted of both open ended and closed ended questions. The questions were mainly to collect information about their family background, type of substance abused, impact of the substance, who provoked them to abuse the substance, other members of the family abusing the substance etc.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table No. 1: Distribution of respondents on the basis of their personal information .

Variable	Percentage
Sex	
Male	88
Female	12
Age (in years)	
Below 14	8
14-16	48
16-18	44
Class	
VIII	10
IX	42
X	48

Table No. 1 shows that 88% boys and 12% girls were addicted to substance abuse. Majority of the students belong to the age group of 14-16 years which is an adolescent period and the most important period in the life of a child. It is this period in which child shapes his personality. Addiction to substances in this period may have an adverse effect on their personality.

Table No.2: Distribution of respondents on the basis of family background

Variable	Percentage
Illiteracy of the parents	
Father	60.0
Mother	80.0
Type of family	
Joint	8.0
Nuclear	92.0
Parental occupation	
Only father	60.0
Both father and mother	40.0
Parental income	
Below 5000	42.0
5000-10000	58.0
Father abusing substance	72.0

Data of table no.2 shows that illiteracy of the parents is the major factor behind the substance abuse among the school children. They are unable to guide their children and warn them of their ill effects. Majority of the parents are illiterate especially mothers who have an important role in the development of the child. Since the parents are mostly illiterate they have low level jobs with very less income. To meet the family needs both the parents are working (as sweepers or maids), there is no one in the house to take care of the children after the school hours so they are more prone to substance abuse as 92% families are nuclear. 72% respondents fathers also used substances which is also a reason behind their inclination towards substance abuse.



Table No.3: Distribution of respondents by their type of substance and habits.

Nature	Percentage
Gutka, Pan masala	83.0
Cough syrup	10.0
Iodex	5.0
Fevibond	2.0
Habits	
Smoking	42.0
Alcohol	18.0

The above table shows that majority(83%) of the respondents are involved in use of Gutka and Pan masala .10% are using cough syrups while very few are using even Iodex and Fevibond not knowing of the deadly effects of these substances on their health.

Table No.4: Distribution of respondents on the basis of the person who initiated them to use the substance.

Variable	Percentage
Class mates	76.0
Friends and people older to them (not classmates)	14.0
Father's substance abuse	10.0

The above table shows that majority of the respondents are initiated by their class mates (76%). The influence of outsider friends was also not less (14%). Few were also influenced by their father's use of the substance.

Table No. 5: Distribution of respondents by the reasons for taking substances.

Reasons	Percentage
For happiness and enjoyment	46.0
Curiosity and courage	32.0
To overcome depression	10.0
To pass time	12.0

The respondents reported various reasons for taking the substances. Most of the respondents abused substances for happiness, enjoyment and display of courage while some took under depression or to pass time leisurely.

Table No.6: Distribution of respondents by their attendance in school and their academic performance.

Variable	Percentage
Regularity in school	
Present	44.0
Absent	56.0
Academic Performance	
Poor	75.0
Below average	18.0
Average	7.0

Data in the above table reveals that the respondents lose interest in school. They don't attend classes and spend time loitering about. This effects their academic performance which in turn further leads to lack of confidence and low attendance of the students in school.

CONCLUSION

Substance abuse is a serious problem of adolescence these days. Students get attracted towards these substances because of thrill, enjoyment, displaying courage to fellow beings, under the influence of peers or to escape from harsh realities of life. Easy availability of the substance and its use by the parents and friends further pulls them into this addiction.



EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

1. Identification of adolescents which may end up in substance abuse.
2. Proper counseling of students and their parents to know their family background.
3. Making them aware of risk involved in substance abuse. It's ill effects on society and especially their health.
4. Helping them to gain confidence in studies by giving extra attention thereby improving their academic performance and increased attendance in school.

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