

## **Association of Poor mental health and substance abuse in students of higher education: A review**

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### **Introduction:**

Substance abuse has significant health, social, and financial effects. Substance use accounts for more than 5% of all disability-adjusted life years worldwide. College students are in a vital stage of brain development, making them biologically and psychosocially vulnerable to drug use. Peer influence, low-risk perception, and dealing with the stress of tough transitions all have the potential to affect college students' drug usage. They may have a riskier substance use style and are more likely to have negative consequences. Substance abuse at college is linked to low academic performance, aggression, and cognitive impairment. The United States and Europe conduct regular studies to estimate the incidence of drug usage in educational settings. Substance use is the most prevalent health risk in the United States.

Southeast Asia, particularly India, has seen an increase in alcohol use. Current drinking is about 1.5 times more common in Indians aged 15 to 19 than in the general population (15 years or older). India is a young country, with a median age of 28 years. Over 60% of the Indian population is of working age. Substance usage may have a negative impact on academic performance of students. Despite the significant burden and potential negative repercussions, data on substance use among Indian college students is scarce. The nationwide household survey is unlikely to educate us about the magnitude of illicit drug use in college students, due to the stigma.

Substance misuse and related issues are a global concern. According to a recent WHO estimate, over 2 billion people drink alcohol, 1.3 billion smoke, and 185 million use drugs. Tobacco, alcohol, cannabis, and other allopathic drugs have been frequently abused by students for a variety of reasons, despite their known negative consequences. Studies done globally includes India estimate a prevalence rate of substance misuse to be around 20-40% among students from various streams.

Students' health and risk behaviours, including substance use and abuse, all have an essential role in determining their current and future health and well-being status (Tountas&Dimitrakaki, Citation2006; World Health Organisation, Citation2004). Academic stress can lead to increased substance usage among young individuals. In a survey study of 128 Grade 11 students attending competitive private schools in the United States, students who reported experiencing high ongoing stress, particularly in relation to academic achievement and the tertiary education admissions process, had high rates of drug and alcohol use. The authors indicate that substance use

is connected with a larger desire for academic accomplishment, higher reported stress, less effective coping techniques, and less closeness with parents.

Through an online survey, NehaJaswal and colleagues estimated the prevalence and severity of substance use in college students from three neighbouring cities in North India. They also examined the demographic correlates of substance use. A cross sectional study was carried out . It was an online survey where they estimated the life time and current prevalence of substance use like tobacco, alcohol, cannabis, cocaine, opioids.

The findings in the study shows that substance use is common among third-level college students. More than half of our survey respondents reported lifetime use of any substances. Alcohol and tobacco were the most commonly reported substances

Mental health is an increasing concern in India, especially among students. With rising pressure to achieve academically and socially, many children are struggling to meet the obligations put on them. As a result, some students use substance addiction to deal with their mental health difficulties.

### **Major causes of substance use in Students**

Peer pressure is one of the leading causes of substance usage among Indian adolescents. Many students feel pressured to fit in and be accepted by their friends, which drives them to participate in risky conduct like substance addiction. This is especially important for students who may feel stigmatized or excluded by their peers. Substance misuse is also frequently viewed as a way of dealing with stress and worry. Students may use drugs or alcohol to escape the stresses of their daily lives and temporarily ameliorate mental health difficulties. This can cause a cycle of addiction and other mental health issues. Many students are facing poor mental health issues during the higher education. They have stress to excel in the exam and also to fit in the parent's expectation level. Students in final year face the fear of job recruitment.

Substance misuse is also frequently viewed as a way of dealing with stress and frustration. Students may use drugs or alcohol to escape the stresses of their daily lives and temporarily ameliorate mental health difficulties. This might result in a cycle of addiction and other mental health issues.

There are other causes which leads the students towards substance abuse. Family history of substance use, parental substance use, poor parental monitoring, family rejection of sexual orientation and gender identity, child hood sexual abuse are also responsible for increase in substance use in students.

### **Effect of substance use on mental health**

Substance abuse can have serious consequences for students' mental health. Substance addiction can cause a variety of mental health concerns, including depression, anxiety, and psychosis. It may also result in long-term physical health

issues such as liver disease and addiction. Substance usage has far-reaching consequences on students' mental health. It may also have an adverse effect on the family and community. Substance misuse can cause financial troubles, family conflict, and social isolation.

**Prevention of substance use in students** Prevention initiatives aim to educate and support individuals and communities in preventing drug use and usage, as well as the development of substance use disorders. Substance abuse and mental problems can complicate daily activities and impede a person's ability to work, communicate with family, and do other important life duties. Mental and substance-use disorders are among the leading causes of disability in the United States. Preventing mental and/or substance use disorders, as well as co-occurring illnesses and related issues, is crucial for both behavioural and physical health.

There are top five ways to prevent substance use as

Understand how substance abuse develops- Substance abuse starts with using addictive substances (illicit or prescribed) for recreational purposes seeking intoxication each time person uses.

Avoid Temptation and Peer Pressure -Avoid friends and relatives that urge you to take substances in order to cultivate healthy interactions and relationships. It is commonly claimed that "we become most like those we surround ourselves by," implying that if you surround yourself with people who abuse drugs and alcohol, you are more likely to do the same. Peer pressure is a significant element of life for both teenagers and adults. If you want to stay drug-free, learn how to simply say no, make a reasonable justification, or organize ahead of time to avoid succumbing to peer pressure.

Seek help for mental illness-Mental illness and substance abuse are frequently associated. If you have a mental ailment such as anxiety, depression, or post-traumatic stress disorder, you should consult a competent therapist or counselor. A professional will teach you healthy coping methods so you can manage your symptoms without resorting to medications or alcohol.

Examine the risk factors-Examine your family history of mental illness and addiction; multiple studies have found that this condition runs in the family, but it may be prevented. The more you understand your biological, environmental, and physical risk factors, the better your chances of overcoming them.

Keep a well-balanced life-People frequently turn to drugs and alcohol when something in their lives is missing or not functioning properly. Practicing stress management techniques will help you overcome these life challenges and live a more balanced and healthier lifestyle. Set objectives and dreams for your future. These can help you focus on what you want

and see that drugs and alcohol will only get in your way and prevent you from accomplishing your goals.

**Conclusion :**

Finally, the mental health of students in India is a serious issue, especially given the high rates of substance addiction among students. Peer pressure and a lack of resources and assistance are important contributors to this problem. It is critical that the government and schools emphasize students' mental health and give tools and support to help them deal with stress and mental health difficulties. Addressing this issue will improve the general well-being of Indian students and contribute to a healthier and more positive society.

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