

Substance and Alcohol Abuse among College Students: Contributing Factors and Intervention Strategies

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Abstract

College and university students in many countries are at increased risk for heavy drinking, with serious immediate health risks (e.g. drink-driving and other substance use), and longer-term risks (e.g. alcohol dependence). Certainly, alcohol consumption of college students has impact on the students themselves and also the college community in general, where the misuse of alcohol can lead to a wide variety of consequences, the most severe being alcohol abuse, dependence, and death. Alcohol use has been an issue of great ambivalence throughout the rich and long history of the Indian subcontinent. The behaviors and attitudes about alcohol use in India are very complex, contradictory and convoluted because of the many different influences in that history. The pattern of drinking in India has undergone a change from occasional & ritualistic use to being a social event. The harmful use of alcohol is a particularly grave threat to men. It is the leading risk factor for death in males ages 15–59, mainly due to injuries, violence and cardiovascular diseases. Globally, 6.2% of all male deaths are attributable to alcohol, compared to 1.1% of female deaths. The rationale of this study is a step to acknowledge the pattern of alcohol use in the youngsters in order to take suitable measures to curb this evil.

Keywords: Alcohol Abuse; College Students; Intervention Strategies

1. Introduction

India has the world's largest youth population which is getting influenced by external factors and has started consuming alcohol at a much higher rate and from a smaller age. Drinking alcohol is a major activity among college students. The youth of a country are always the vital resources of that country. The present and the future of a country are built upon them. But today sadly it is being observed more and more that alcohol and substance abuse in India among youth is very much on the increase. The youth of a country are always the vital resources of that country. The present and the future of a country are built upon them. But today sadly it is being observed more and more than substance misuse in India among youth is very much on the increase. The period of one's youth is a delicate phase of mental and physical improvement, and always fraught with danger as it is also a phase susceptible for all kinds of misdemeanours. The pre-adult life is a life of training and learning and for procuring skills and abilities that builds upon one's life as an adult. So the emphasis is always on acquiring skills and knowledge that will hold one in good stead when one gets into adulthood. But sometimes these stages of pre-adulthood and young adulthood situate the youth in conditions where substance abuse seems to be a convenient way out, or a 'cool' thing to do, rather than making them see the evil side of its usage. Today substance abuse among teenagers is a general concern globally. The period of youth is seen to be predominantly tilted towards deviant behaviour, including utilisation of substance. The pressure to do well in examinations, peer pressure, performance anxiety and changes in social equations are some of the factors that have assumed alarming proportions today and are playing vital roles in initiation of substance abuse among the youth. As defined by World Health Organization (WHO), "Substance ill-use alludes to the unsafe or dangerous utilisation of psychoactive substances, including liquor and illegal drugs. Psychoactive substances utilization can prompt reliance disorder - a bunch of behavioral, psychological, and physiological phenomena that grow after rehashed substance utilization and that commonly incorporate a powerful urge to take the drugs, challenges in controlling its utilization, continuing in its utilization in spite of destructive results, a higher need given to drugs use than to different exercises and commitments, expanded resistance, and at times a physical withdrawal state." UN report also indicates that one million heroin addicts have been identified in India, and informally there are upwards of five million addicts.

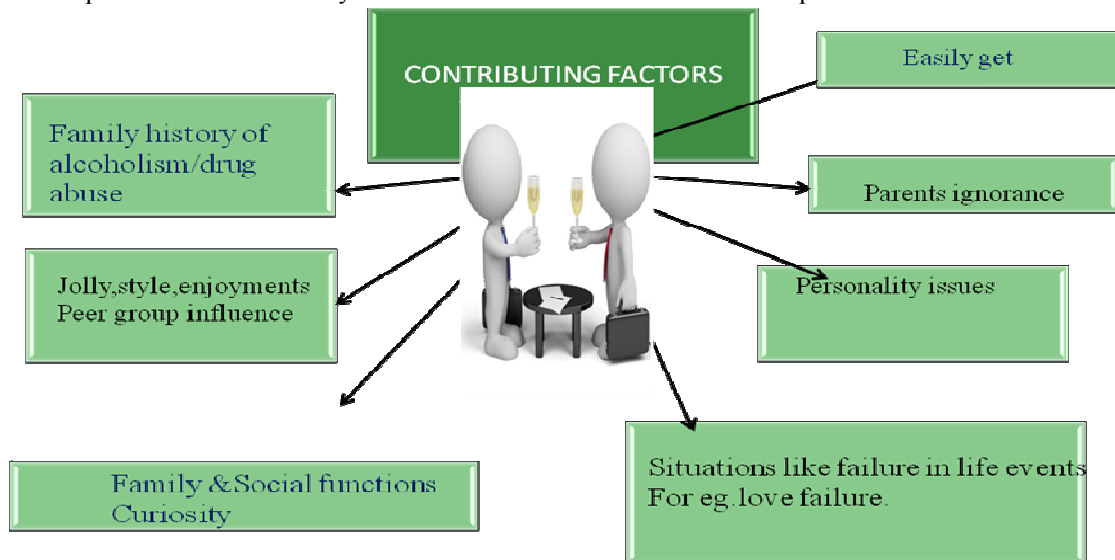
1.1.1. Substance and alcohol abuse

Substance abuse refers to the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol and illicit drugs (Cannabis, opioids, nicotine and hallucinogens). Psychoactive substance use can lead to dependence syndrome - a cluster of behavioural, cognitive, and physiological phenomena that develop after repeated substance use and that typically include a strong desire to take the drug, difficulties in controlling its use, persisting in its use despite harmful consequences, a higher priority given to drug use than to other activities and obligations, increased tolerance, and sometimes a physical withdrawal state.

1.1.2. Current Scenario of Alcoholism

Global alcohol consumption has increased in recent decades, with most or all of this increase occurring in developing countries. The Global Information System on Alcohol and Health (GISAH) is an essential tool for assessing and monitoring the health situation and trends related to alcohol consumption, alcohol-related harm,

and policy responses in countries. The harmful use of alcohol results in the death of 2.5 million people annually. Nearly half of students who drink have reported binge drinking, according to a report by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Excessive drinking is not only a major health concern in the long-term, it can lead to immediate tragedies such as assault, injury, arrest and even death. Learn more about binge drinking and the effects of alcohol on college campuses. There are 60 different types of diseases where alcohol has a significant causal role. It also causes harm to the well-being and health of people around the drinker. In 2005, the worldwide total consumption was equal to 6.13 litres of pure alcohol per person 15 years and older. Unrecorded consumption accounts for nearly 30% of the worldwide total adult consumption.



1.1.3 Consequences Faced by Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Physically

- Withdrawal symptoms;
- Tremors, sweating, weakness
- Anxiety, panic when alcohol/Drug not available
- Rapid heart rate, increased BP
- Nausea, vomiting, Insomnia, poor appetite
- Rarely seizures, Brain damage,
- Hepatitis, hepatomegaly, cirrhosis
- Gastritis, peptic ulcer, cardio vascular diseases
- Poor judgment /concentration/memory loss

Psychologically

- Irritation , anger, anxiety, restlessness
- Depression or mood swings
- Hallucinations ,ideas of reference/delusions
- violent behaviors, assaults
- Self harm/threatening behaviours
- Suicidal tendencies/attempts
- Paranoia
- Sexual Dysfunctions
- Guilty feelings/low self esteem

Socially

- Absenteeism
- Irregular attendance
- poor concentration in Studies
- Behavioral Problems
- Attend the class under Intoxification.
- Conflict or Arguments with Staff
- Dropout

Intervention Strategies

Individual Counselling

- ❖ Personality assessment
- ❖ Cognitive Behaviour Therapy
- ❖ Behaviour Modification therapy
- ❖ Psycho Therapy

Group Therapy

- Awareness and Preventive Education
- Drug Awareness and Counselling
- NGO discussion for Drug Abuse Prevention
- Innovative Interventions to reinforce group Therapy
- Family Counselling and Home visits

2. Suggestions

- The institute authorities should determine the depth and severity of substance abuse among students so that rectification measures could be subsequently planned.
- Health data of individual students should be recorded and digitised. Current health data can also be collected by organizing regular health and nutrition camps once every year or even once every semester. Attendance of all students in these health camps should be compulsory.
- Written policy on drugs and alcohol usage inside campus should be made available to all students.
- Yearly parents-teachers meeting should be there. There should be mission & vision statements relating to a 'Substance-free campus.'

3. Conclusion

Alcohol affects almost every organ of the body. It can cause an endless list of negative health outcomes. Consumption of alcoholic beverages is a public health problem. It not only harms the person who consumes it but also harms the family and the society in general. In an attempt to generate more income, governments in many countries are promoting the sale of alcohol containing drinks. But it has been found the expenditure for the treatment of problems resulting due to consumption of alcohol is more than the income generated. 13 Over the years, the age of drinking has been reducing. More and more people have started having alcohol at younger ages. The college setting is an ideal place for initiation into the world of alcohol. The students are away from the watchful eyes of elders. They are young and want to try out any new thing. They are under pressure from friends to be like rest of the students. College students are at that phase of life when they start taking independent decisions. Several studies that have been conducted elsewhere have tried to quantify the problem of alcohol use among the college students. They have looked into the patterns and beliefs related to alcohol use among college students. 31 32 These patterns and beliefs vary in the different region among different population groups. In India researchers have tried to address the issue of drinking among college students, but they are very few in number. Also, there is paucity of data on any attempt to understand the difference in patterns and beliefs among different population groups in India.

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