

Consumption of Narcotics among Adolescents in Rural and Urban Areas and Effectiveness of Support System in Educational Institutions

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Abstract

Consumption of drugs is a very serious issue among the adolescents now a days. The State of Kerala- 'The God's own country', which occupies top positions in many social indices, is now witnessing an alarming rise in the rate of child drug abuse. A great majority of children are exposed to Narcotics and it is available to them through the closest sources like family, friends, community etc. It is very important for the society to take serious steps against this menace. This research aims to analyse the consumption of narcotics among adolescents in rural and urban areas and effectiveness of support system in educational institutions. As per the findings its very clear that in most of the cases family, peer influence and social medias plays a vital role in leading adolescents to drug abuse. This study also highlight the importance of an effective support system in educational institutions.

Key words: Narcotics, Peer influence, Social Media, Support system

Introduction

“If the current trend continues, million children alive today will be killed by tobacco” – WHO

Now a days consumption of narcotics by adolescents is a serious social problem which is faced by the society. A study by NCPCR (National Commission for Protection of Child Rights) reported that tobacco and alcohol

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were found to be the most common substances used by children, with 83.2% and 67.7% of respondents respectively admitting to having used it. 35.4% of respondents admitted to having used cannabis, while 34.7% said they used inhalants as a means of intoxicant. A 2007-2012 report by the union Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) had also indicated a rise in the number of children indulging in substance abuse. More than 13% of those involved in drug and substance abuse in India, are below 20 years.

Studies such as the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, formally called the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, reported by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, indicate that some children are already abusing drugs at age 12 or 13, which means that some begin even earlier. Early abuse often includes such substances as tobacco, alcohol, inhalants, marijuana, and prescription drugs such as sleeping pills and anti-anxiety medicines. Scientists have proposed various explanations of why some individuals become involved with drugs and then escalate to abuse. One explanation points to a biological cause, such as having a family history of drug or alcohol abuse. Another explanation is that abusing drugs can lead to affiliation with drug-abusing peers, which, in turn, exposes the individual to other drugs. Researchers have found that youth who rapidly increase their substance abuse have high levels of risk factors with low levels of protective factors. Gender, race, and geographic location can also play a role in how and when children begin abusing drugs.

Kerala, India's most literate state with more than 93.91 percent literacy rate, is also home for largest number of alcoholics, cancer patients and children addicted to tobacco. A study by National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre (NDDTC) and the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) revealed this startling fact. The study said that 74 percent of Kerala's children between the age group 5-18 consume tobacco. The annual reports of Child Line India also revealed this fact that Child Drug Abuse is increasing at an alarming rate in the state and the shocking fact is that they are getting exposure to it at an early age.

The objective of the study were :To analyse the knowledge of the students about the facts regarding legislations related to child drug abuse, health consequences-physical and psychological ,to explore their understanding of signs

of abuse and to understand the effectiveness of support systems available in the school overcoming their habit of consumption of Narcotics .

For analysing the influencing factors which lead to the usage of Narcotics were shortlisted as peer group, family and social media and the researchers finally assessed the effectiveness of support system available in the educational system.

Objectives

- To assess the knowledge of students from rural and urban area about legislations related to child drug abuse.
- To assess the knowledge of students from rural and urban area related to health consequences, physical and psychological issues.
- To check and study their understanding of signs of abuse.
- To identify the role of peer group as an influencing agent.
- To learn the contribution of family as an influencing agent towards the use of narcotics.
- To analyse the role of social media as an influencing agent.
- To study the effectiveness of support systems available in educational institutions in rural and urban area.

Methodology:

The research was a quantitative study and descriptive in nature. 10 samples selected from rural and urban areas of Kottayam district using purposive sampling method. Samples from rural area were selected from a school in Erattupetta block and for Urban area selected from Kottayam Municipal area. A student studying in plus two who has been caught by the school authorities for substance abuse in school premises was the unit of study.

Major Findings

General Information: 60% of the urban students belongs to 16 years of age and 40% belongs to 17years of age. In rural area 40 percentage of students belongs to 15 years ,three percentage belongs to 16 years ,two percentage belongs to 17 years and 1 percentage belongs to 18 years of age.

In urban area student first used narcotics between the age 9-12 years whereas in rural area 90 percentage of them experienced it between the age 13-16 years .Only 1 percentage used first time at the age of 17.

To assess the knowledge regarding legislations, students in both rural and

urban area were aware about it is punishable to sell narcotics to children below the age of 18. The students of urban area are not at all aware about any other provisions of legislations whereas students from rural area are more aware about the legal aspects like not selling narcotic items near to the educational institutions, knowingly allowing ones premises to be used for committing an offence, production, manufacture, possession, import, interstate export, consumption, usage of drugs etc. is punishable, Import, export or transshipment of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, attempts, abetment and criminal conspiracy. Through the interview the researcher found out that more than attending awareness classes, their experience from the community they live made them more aware about the legal provisions.

The awareness level of students in urban area about physical and psychological issues and also signs of abuse were higher than students in rural area.

Peer Group as a Factor of Influence

100 percentage of the respondents from urban area have special friendship groups whereas 80 percentage of the students from rural setting have such groups.

In urban area 70 percentage of the students maintains same friendship for 3 years and 30 percentage of them have 4 years of friendship. Whereas in rural area, 80 percentage of them have only one year of friendship.

In urban area, 100 percentage of them felt friendship as the reason to be in the friends circle where as in rural area students have many reasons to be in the group like own interest, friendship and peer pressure with 50 percentage, 30 percentage and 20 percentage respectively.

Attitude behind being in this special group; in urban area 60 percentage of them is because of friendship and 20 percentage of them have the opinion that better understanding between friends. In rural area half of the population stayed because of friendship, 40 percentage being in this group because of peer pressure and 10 percentage of the population initiated the group by himself.

In urban area 90 percentage of them responded that none of their friends left the group and the remaining 10 percentage said that some of their friends

left the group and the reason was transfer of their parents. In rural area 40 percentage said that their friends left the group and the reason was lack of interest, pressure from parents, quarrel etc.

By analysing the source from where the students getting narcotics, 40 % of rural students responded that they were getting it from friends, 40 % from seniors and 20 percentage from agents, whereas 60 % of urban students revealed that they are getting it from outside sources and 40 % from friends within the campus. Among them 80 percentage mentioned that home is also a source for them to get narcotics.

The school counsellor revealed that there are multiple sources other than the above mentioned areas like external agents, migrant labourers etc. By analysing the means to get it: 10 percentage of the rural population replied that they earn money by self-employment and again 10 percentage said that they were working as agents, 40 percentage said that they were doing part time work and the remaining 40 percentage said that they are mis-utilizing money from parents. In contrast, 40 percentage of urban students are stealing things from home, 30 percentage getting loans from friends and the remaining 30 percentage meet the expenses from pocket money.

While checking the frequency of usage, 100 percentage of urban students said that they were using it once in a month whereas 80 percentage of rural students using it for recreation, 20 percentage for excitement and 10 percentage to impress people of opposite gender.

The changes they felt by using it: 80 percentage of urban students said that they feel courageous and 20 percentage said that they feel frigidness whereas 30 percentage of rural students feel like taking risk, 40 percentage feel like matured and again 30 percentage feel like courageous.

100 percentage of urban students getting information regarding availability of narcotics from their friends. At the same time 30 percentage of rural students getting information from elders especially from seniors, 40 percentage from friends, 10 percentage from agents and 20 percentage through media.

By analysing the reason to use narcotics for first time 100 percentage of urban students said that for an experience whereas 40 percentage of rural

students responded that for enjoying parties, 30 percentage to forget sorrows and again 30 percentage for an experience.

During the unavailability of narcotics 60 percentage of the rural students were buying it in black or illegal way and 40 percentage will find another item of drugs or alcohol where as 100 percentage of urban students use their networks and contacts to get it.

By analysing if the use of narcotics is by force or by the influence of someone, 80 percentage of urban students said that there is nothing so but 20 percentage said that there is a force by friends. Whereas 80 percentage of rural students were using it by force or influence by friends and the remaining 20 percentage by own interest.

Family as a factor of influence

100 percentage of the urban students and 90 percentage of rural students responded that their family members are using narcotics. Only 10 percentage of rural students said that none of their family members use narcotics.

By analysing their attitude towards family members who use narcotics, 80 percentage of rural students said that they feel anger towards their family members and 20 percentage said that they avoided them, whereas 100 percentage of the urban students have no response in this, matter.

90 percentage of the rural students said that there is conflict at their homes due to the use of narcotics it is affecting their personal life and education. 10 percentage responded that there is no conflict. Whereas 60 percentage of urban students share there is conflict at their homes and 40 percentage of them said that it is affecting their personal life and education. 20 percentage said there is no conflict and the remaining 20 percentage takes a neutral stand.

70 percentage of rural students and 90 percentage of urban students responded that they have a force from home to use Narcotics. Only 30 percentage of rural students and 10 percentage of urban students said there is no force from home.

By analysing the chance to use Narcotics at home, 80 percentage of Urban students agreed it and 20 percentage said no, whereas 20 percentage of rural students said yes and 80 percentage said no.

By assessing the attitude of family members towards the students for using

narcotics; 80 percentage of urban students said that there is no objection by their family members and 20 percentage said that it creates family problems. In rural area 80 percentage of the students said their parents won't allow this and it creates family problems. But 20 percentage said there is no objection by their family members.

Social Media as a Factor of Influence

100 percentage of urban students having accounts in social media whereas 90 percentage of rural students said they have accounts and 10 percentage of them do not have.

About membership in narcotic users group in Social media, students from rural and urban said that they have no idea about that, but they revealed that they have their friends group in social media and in that group they pass messages related to Narcotics.

By analysing their response towards the posts or photos related to the use of Narcotics, students from both rural and urban area responded that they will definitely click like and will give comment of encouraging nature. They said that these kind of posts are getting more response than others. 100 percentage of urban students said that they took it as a prestige to get more likes and comments. 60 percentage of rural students also have same opinion but 40 percentage said that it is not at all a matter for them.

By analysing the supporting factors they identified in social media to raise their interest towards Narcotics 60 percentage of rural people said it makes a heroic image among friends, 30 percentage said that they feel like doing great things and 10 percentage said that they feel adorable. Students from urban area not responded to this.

Effectiveness of Support System

100 percentage of the urban students said that they will seek their friends help if they face any problem due to the use of Narcotics. At the same time 30 percentage of rural students responded that they will seek help from parents, 50 percentage said from friends and 20 percentage said from teachers.

By analysing the availability of support systems at school, 100 percentage of the urban students responded that they have counselling facility at school, whereas rural students responded that they have no counselling facility at

school so they meet their teachers.

By analysing the need and importance of support systems, all students from urban and rural area responded that it is a need and students from rural area said that they are getting services from teacher's, but it is not professional help like counsellor.

To identify how they access to this service system, 90 percentage of the urban students said that the counsellor herself identified them and 10 percentage said they took their own initiative to approach the counsellor. Urban students getting counselling service in all working days whereas 30 percentage rural students finding time to meet their teachers and having personal sharing, 50 percentage of rural students having good relationships with their parents too.

100 percentage of rural students said that there is no private place at school to disclose matters with teachers. By sharing their problems, 80 percentage said they are facing bad comments from friends, 10 percentage said that they facing bad comments from teachers and the remaining 10 percentage said that they were labelled as a student with bad conduct. By analysing their attitude toward these kind of response from the part of others, 60 percentage of rural students said that they won't mind it and 40 percentage said that it makes them rebel.

Suggestions

Prepare a curriculum to handle the issues of narcotic consumption among children –with special emphasis on preventive and curative functions.

Role of School Counsellor- The school should take an initiative to appoint a Counsellor or Case Worker, who are able to provide therapeutic intervention to help students having problems. The school counsellors or case worker can focus on preventive and curative functions.

The Directorate of Higher Education should give standing instructions to schools to assign special hour (at least. 2 hour per month) to discuss the matters regarding how the students can be part in the programme against narcotics not only at school level but also at community .

Make mandatory arrangement of a room for counselling or confidential share in the school.

In the absence of a support system in the school, the Government should bear the expense for consulting an expert for getting helps to the students.

Enable more facilities in rural areas to inform the police and other authorities about the availability of Narcotics

Provide facilities like support systems at panchayat level in rural areas by appointing Counsellors at Panchayat.

Possible Social Work Interventions

Need more research based intervention in this field from the part of Social Workers.

The Counsellor or Case worker should make periodic evaluation of the student at school and the school social worker has to maintain a records of family socio economic assessment of every student in the school.

Form a student task force at school under the guidance of an officer from excise department and anti-narcotic cell. School social worker can coordinate the activities of the student task force.

Parents also need attitudinal change for this rather than awareness. The school counsellor can convey the parents about the negative side of substance abuse and attitude of students towards this.

Observation of anti-narcotic week at school. School social worker along with PTA can take active role in it. The Anti-Narcotic campaign and programmes should be taken up by the school authorities in collaboration with school mental health programmes.

Form adolescent groups in the community and generate awareness.

Implement creative programmes to divert the energy and thinking ability of adolescent for a good purpose

Family based intervention should need more focus.

Conclusion

Kerala 'The God's own country', which occupies top positions in many social indices, is now witnessing an alarming rise in the rate of child drug abuse. A great majority of children are exposed to Narcotics and it is available to them by the closest sources like family, friends, community etc. So it is very important to take serious steps at this time. The authorities at District level and state level should open their eyes towards this.

Through this study the researchers found out that the students are getting

peer pressure to experience Narcotics and are easily available in nearby areas of the schools. As adolescence is a period of experimentation, they experience it and consume it for recreation and excitement. Peers, family and social media has crucial role in triggering their emotions towards consumption of Narcotics. This research throws light to the need of effective support system at schools irrespective of rural and urban. These systems are not available even if they are prescribed in the rules for the educational institutions. Effective functioning of the support systems can bring changes in the attitude and perception of the younger generation and motivates them to achieve heights in their life as productive citizens.

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