

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Substance Use among Students of Tribal Populated District of India-A Cross Sectional Questionnaire Based Study

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Abstract

Introduction: Today, there is no country in the world which is free from substance use and addiction. Millions of person with addiction are leading miserable lives. Substance use and addiction can halt progress of nation specifically tribal regions since these are neglected regions in most of the developing countries.

Aim: There is dearth of knowledge regarding studies about substance use among students of Adilabad- a tribal district of Telangana; hence the present study was planned. **Materials and Methods:** In this cross sectional study 193 college going students from intermediate to bachelor degree of Adilabad, a tribal district of Telangana participated. They were given a questionnaire about substance use and addiction behavior.

Results: A total of 73 (37.8%), out of 193 students between the age group of 16 to 20 were found to use various substances. Majority of respondent were male in teen age from rural and tribal background. Main substance was alcohol 46(63%) followed by cigarette 20 (27.3%). Majority 36 (52.82%) were occasional alcoholic while only 8(10.2%) were chronic alcoholics. They felt it was good and took it either for enjoyment or to reduce feeling of sadness. Either their family member or neighbors were addicted to alcohol. They mentioned vomiting and hangover as main disadvantage. They use pocket money to purchase alcohol of local variety. **Conclusion:** Good number of college going students are using substances and the main purpose is enjoyment. They are using mainly alcohol and tobacco. The most important factors which promote them are peer pressure and use of these agents by close relatives or neighbors. Specific programs are needed to correct such practices among these students.

Keywords: Alcohol addiction, Drug addiction, Substance Use, Substance addiction, Tobacco Addiction

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Introduction

Globally substance use/abuse and addiction is common and even it can be said that not a single country in the world is free from substance addiction. Millions of persons with addiction are leading miserable lives. World Health Organization (WHO) described that substance abuse is persistent or sporadic drug use, inconsistent with or unrelated to acceptable medical practice¹. Substance dependent persons are the persons who initially drug abusers. Substance dependence or addiction is a psychiatric illness and major psychological problem. It is characterized by compulsive substance use and appearance of withdrawal

symptoms when the substance is no longer used². It is a multidimensional problem which involves not only the person, but also influences the society in diverse ways³. Substance addiction is responsible for various kinds of morbidity and even mortality and it is one of the most common reasons of human deaths around the world⁴. Among the most commonly used substances, alcohol and tobacco are leading substances although various other substances are also commonly used like cannabis, cocaine and even prescription drugs. Every year alcohol associated disorders are responsible for 5-10% morbidity globally⁵. Specifically if young population is involved in heavy drinking of alcohol they are more likely to face both current

and future alcohol-related problems. In India, the trend of substance use is not different from other nations. Even use of smokeless tobacco like Gutka is much common in comparison to western countries. In India, tobacco use in smoking and non-smoking form has increased at alarming level from 1960s which is responsible for increased incidence of lung cancer in smokers while oral cancers in smokeless tobacco users⁶.

Substance use progresses to addiction and addicted individuals are more socially isolated. It is related with many socioeconomic problems. Addictions like heavy episodic drinking is associated with risky behaviors like desire for multiple sex partners and number of negative academic, physical, and social consequences^{7,8}. Substance addiction can halt progress of nation specifically tribal regions since these are neglected regions in most of the developing countries. Hence the present study was conducted to know the status of substance use among the students of Adilabad- a tribal district of Telangana state of India which is mainly populated with rural and tribal people. Moreover, there is dearth of information regarding studies about substance use and addiction. The information from the study will be useful for better planning in the district.

Materials & Methods

It was a cross sectional study which was conducted during the years 2013 and 2014. All the students were permanent residents of Adilabad, a tribal populated district of North Telangana, India. All were either intermediate college going students or bachelor degree and diploma college students. A total of 193 students of either sex participated in the study. Students were initially interviewed to know whether they use substances or not. After that those students who were using substance or addicted to that and willing to participate in the study were enrolled. Written informed consent was obtained from the study subjects prior to commencing the study. They were given a questionnaire about substance use and addiction behavior.

Results

A total of 73 (37.8%), out of 193 students between the age group of 16 to 20 were found to

be involved in substance use. Majority of respondents were male who numbered 67 (91.7%) in their teen age from rural and tribal background. Only 6 (8.2%) females were addicted to substances.

Main substance which they were using was alcohol 46(63%) followed by various tobacco substances like cigarette 20 (27.3%), Bidi (local form of cigarette in which tobacco is kept in hand rolled leaf of another plant, tembur-Diospyros melanoxylon), which is popular in India and smoked). Paan with tobacco (a leaf which contains lime, betel nuts, tobacco etc.) and Gutkha (small pieces of betel nuts with lime and tobacco).

Table- 1: Types of addiction

Sr. No.	Substance	Cases	Percentage
1	Alcohol	46	63%
2	Cigarette	20	27.3%
3	Pan	6	8.2%
4	Gutkha	4	5.4%
5	Others	8	10%

Table-2: Disadvantages of substances

Sr. No	Adverse Reactions	Cases	Percentage
1	Weakness	2	22.2%
2	Vomiting	1	11.1
3	Loss of Appetite	3	33.3
4	Hangover	3	33.3

In alcohol group, country liquor (locally prepared) and toddy were more popular. Beer was next most popular beverage amongst them. But costly and branded alcohol was rarely used by the study subjects. Some students were using alcohol and tobacco in both smoking and non-smoking forms. 10% students were using other substances (like Ganja- cannabis and other) but they were also taking either tobacco or alcohol. Not a single person was found to be using Ganja alone (Table- 1). Majority 36 (52.8%) were occasional alcoholics while only 8(10.2%) were chronic alcoholics in mixed group of substance users.

Most important finding was that either some member of their family or neighbors or friends were involved in using the substances. They mentioned that this reason has also promoted them to start using those substances. Most of them felt that substances were good for them

and they took them either for enjoyment or to reduce feeling of sadness. Only 9 (6.57%) out of 73 students mentioned that substance use or addiction had disadvantages like adverse effects. Among the 9% students who mentioned disadvantages of substances, hangover (33.3%) and loss of appetite (33.3%) were the most disturbing thing they observed while taking substances. Weakness (22.2%) was another disadvantage of substance use (Table- 2). They mentioned that pocket money was the only available source of money for them to purchase substances.

Discussion

In this cross-sectional study, a total of 193 students from tribal district of north Telangana participated and among them 37.8% confessed that they were taking some substances. Since the study was conducted among college going students hence the age group was in between 16 to 20 years. Male predominance was observed which is because of culture of male dominance in Indian society. All had tribal or rural background as the study was conducted in government colleges in which most of the students are from such backgrounds and education is relatively cheaper or free and since most of the tribal or rural students cannot bear high educational expenses of private institutions. Digambar Kangale in 2011 in tribal populated western region of Maharashtra, Thane, found prevalence of substance use as high as 64.91% among tribal youths. Digambar Kangale et al mentioned one study conducted at eastern district of Maharashtra, Yavatmal. In which the authors observed substance use prevalence as high as 65.31% among tribal male adolescents although it was tobacco⁴. In remote regions of Arunachal Pradesh (Himalayan range) Deswal et al also observed high level of substance use and that was alcohol⁹.

In the present study, the main substance was alcohol followed by various forms of tobacco. Digambar et al observed that most of the study subjects (54.96%) used tobacco followed by alcohol (27%). Cannabis was rarely used as only two subjects used it. They also observed use of bidi smoking, gutkha chewing, and tobacco mixed with lime and khaini and cigarette rarely. Substantial number of subjects (22.52%) was using both tobacco and alcohol⁴. In Sambhalpur

region of Orissa and Karimanagr district of Telangana, Lisa S et al¹⁰ and Kokiwar PR et al¹¹ also found results similar to Digamber et al⁴. But our findings are slightly different from them as we observed use of alcohol more commonly in comparison to tobacco. Moreover, in tobacco group our study population was involved more commonly in cigarette smoking in comparison to other forms of tobacco. With best of our efforts we failed to identify the reasons behind such differences between our study and other studies.

One thing was common among all the students that they were among the persons who were taking those substances regularly like either any member of their family or neighbors or friends. It indicates that surrounding atmosphere has great influence on their habits. Peer group pressure and impact habits of family members are affecting them. They are observing them and starting it just for curiosity and fun which is progressing into their regular habits. But impact of advertisements, use by celebrities, colorful and attractive packagings of tobacco are not influencing them as was observed by Digambar et al⁴. Other authors also observed great influence of family members and friends on such habits. Dhupdale et al¹² in Goa, India observed strong association between uses of alcohol in children of alcoholic fathers as alcohol use was 2.9 times more common in them in comparison to children of non alcoholic fathers. Makwan NR et al¹³ also found parental and peer group influence in their study population. Digambar et al observed upto 67% influence of peer group on the habit of their study population⁴.

We found that almost 94% students felt that the substance they were using are good for them and they took them either for enjoyment or to reduce feeling of sadness. Only few students mentioned disadvantages and even those were minor kind like hangover, loss of appetite and weakness. It looks disturbing that large numbers of respondents are not feeling any problem with use of such substances although it is well known that alcohol and tobacco are main culprits for various kinds of morbid conditions specifically systemic disorders with alcohol and oral and respiratory diseases with use of tobacco. Long term use of these substances significantly increases premature death among the users.

Tobacco is responsible for cancers like lung cancers by smoking, oral cavity cancers by chewing tobacco. Moreover, alcohol and tobacco are also associated with adverse socioeconomic, behavioral or emotional problems in those individuals. The deleterious effects of concurrent use of ganja or such types of other substance with alcohol are far greater than the effects from either substance used alone. They experience more problems than those who used alcohol alone. Greater degree of alcohol dependence, social consequences, and depression is seen among the concurrent users¹⁴⁻¹⁶.

Study subjects were using their pocket money to purchase substances, indicating that they are not involved in unlawful or wrong activities to arrange money for fulfilling their desire. But use of their limited pocket money as they are from relatively poor background is draining their pocket money. They can utilize that money in a much better way if they avoid using such substances.

Conclusion

Good number of college going students is using substances and the main purpose is enjoyment. They are using mainly alcohol and tobacco. Since these rural cum tribal background students are using agents just for fun and following their friends, family members and neighbors and using only pocket money, they can be easily distracted from such practice. Specific and intensive programs including education regarding such bad habits should be initiated to correct them. If they are not corrected then they can become severe addict which will be difficult to treat. Moreover, such addicted youth will be a national loss specifically to this underdeveloped region.

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