

Drugs - Related Knowledge and attitudes among University Students in Mizoram: A Sociological Study

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The increase in substance abuse among youths and its complications from one of the most pressing health problems among students as an important and vulnerable group in society. Marijuana, Proxivon, Heroin, and Indian-produced pharmaceutical drugs are the most frequently abused drugs in Mizoram. This alarming issue had been a serious public health problem in the State as well as worldwide.

Objectives: This study aims to assess the drug related knowledge and attitude among university students in Mizoram in 2018.

Result: The study revealed that 61.7 per cent of the respondents have wrong perception about substance abuse because they mentioned that such abuse reduce the stress level of consumers. Nearly two third of the respondents, (65.0%) wrongly revealed that drugs increase the pleasure of life and also one third of the respondents (31.7 %) wrongly mentioned that the effects of drugs are temporary. Because of this wrong perception nearly more than two fifth of the respondents (43.3%) accepted that they are using drugs occasionally. The rates of usage of substances are alarming in nature in the study area.

Conclusion: Students tend to adopt negative attitude towards drugs abuse only after they have good knowledge regarding drugs. On the basis of the results of the present study, it may be suggested that youth should be aware regarding the complications and consequences of drugs consumption, so that they may adopt the negative attitude towards drugs and plan their future life accordingly.

Key Words : Knowledge, Attitude, Drugs, University students, Mizoram

INTRODUCTION

The epidemic of substance abuse in young generation has assumed alarming dimensions in India. Changing cultural values, increasing economic stress and dwindling supportive bonds are leading to initiation into substance use. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) substance abuse is persistent or sporadic drug use inconsistent with or unrelated to acceptable medical practice. The picture is grim if the world statistics on the drugs scenario is taken into account. With a turnover of around \$500 billion, it is the third largest business in the world, next to petroleum and arms trade. About 190 million people all over the world consume one

drug or the other. June 26 is celebrated as International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking every year. It is an exercise undertaken by the world community to sensitize the people in general and the youth in particular, to the menace of drugs.

Today, there is no part of the world that is free from the curse of drug trafficking and drug addiction. Millions of drug addicts, all over the world, are leading miserable lives, between life and death. India too is caught in this vicious circle of drug abuse, and the numbers of drug addicts are increasing day by day. According to a UN report, One million heroin addicts are registered in India, and unofficially there are as many as five million. Inhalation of heroin alone has given way to intravenous

drug use, that too in combination with other sedatives and painkillers. Cannabis, heroin, and Indian-produced pharmaceutical drugs are the most frequently abused drugs in India.

Drug abuse has led to a detrimental impact on the society. It has led to increase in the crime rate. Addicts resort to crime to pay for their drugs. Drugs remove inhibition and impair judgment egging one on to commit offences. Incidences of teasing, group clashes, assault and impulsive murders increase with drug abuse. Apart from affecting the financial stability, addiction increases conflicts and causes untold emotional pain for every member of the family. With most drug users being in the productive age group of 18-35 years, the loss in terms of human potential is incalculable. It is estimated that, in India, by the time most boys reach the ninth grade, about 50 per cent of them have tried at least one of the substance of abuse nature. In last three decades, many epidemiological surveys have been carried out in India to assess the prevalence of substance abuse.

Mizoram, Punjab and Manipur are among the states where people are most vulnerable to drug abuse. Over the past three decades, drug abuse has taken an endemic form in most of the states of the Northeast and gradually it has been on the rise in the entire region. With over a 1,400 deaths due to drug abuse in Mizoram since 1984, a recent survey has revealed that drug abuse in Mizoram has been showing an upward trend (Northeast Today reports). This multifaceted phenomenon greatly affects the social, private, and psychological behavior of an individual in particular and the society in general.

The introduction of synthetic drugs and intravenous drug use leading to HIV/AIDS has added a new dimension to the problem, especially in the Northeast states of the country. The pharmaceutical products containing narcotic drugs are also increasingly being abused in Mizoram. Thus, there is a need to develop more effective evidence based prevention methods. In public health practice, the saying goes: prevention is better than cure. It would be much more cost-effective and socially beneficial if the epidemic of substance/drug abuse in India could be managed by preventive interventions specifically targeted at the adolescents, based on their knowledge base and mindset. There is a need for the government enforcement agencies, the non-governmental organizations, church leaders and others to collaborate and supplement each other's efforts for a solution to the problem of drug addiction through awareness and legal actions in Mizoram.

Review of literature :

Nebhinani *et al.* (2013), conducted study, entitled "Substance-Related Knowledge and Attitude in School and College Students" found that majority of the students has adequate knowledge about harmful effects of addictive substances but had limited information regarding treatment options. The study revealed the need for spreading more awareness for prevention as well as treatment of substance related problems.

Li *et al.* (2002), studied on "Parental substance use as a modifier of adolescent substance use risk" in USA and showed that increasing numbers of parents and friends using substances were associated with greater risk of adolescent substance use. However, non-using parents had a buffering effect on friends' influences to use substances, such that friends' use did not affect adolescent use when parents were non-users of drugs.

Sourizaei *et al.* (2011), Drug use is one of the most dangerous problems of human societies in the modern era, which, in addition to numerous health problems, put also the cultural-social foundations at risk, and unfortunately, the youth are the most vulnerable age group for drug abuse. Nowadays, the emphasis is to cooperatively and coordinately prevent drug addiction and because this principle is superior to drug abuse treatment, there have been numerous training methods for preventing drug abuse for different age periods. The present study is aimed to review these methods and also the causes of drug abuse and the researches done in this field.

Kausar and Kiani (2011) conducted their study on "An empirical study of prevalent ratio of drug addiction among the students at higher secondary level" in district of Islamabad, Pakistan to find out the different stimuli and factors causing drug addiction. The result of the study showed that majority of the students blamed media, playing as one of the stimulant factors for developing a positive attitude towards drug addiction. Besides this, due to emotional imbalances at the very crucial adolescent age, facing failures in love affairs and social disorders emerged as the key causes for drug addiction.

Tsering *et al.* (2010), conducted a survey of "Substance use among adolescent high School students in India: A survey of knowledge, attitude, and opinion" concluded that in spite of being aware of the harmful effects of substance use, adolescents take up this habit. This requires comprehensive prevention and control programs in schools and the community, targeted toward

adolescents and their parents and other family members. Effective measures are required to encourage shaping the attitude of school children toward self-confidence and adequacy, as also to prevent risk behavior among adolescents.

Ahmad *et al.* (2009), in their study found that the epidemic of substance abuse in young generation has assumed alarming dimensions in India. Changing cultural values, increasing economic stress and dwindling supportive bonds are leading to initiation into substance use. Cannabis, heroin, and Indian-produced pharmaceutical drugs are the most frequently abused drugs in India. Drug use, misuse or abuse is also primarily due to the nature of the drug abused, the personality of the individual and the addict's immediate environment. In this paper the researchers are going to study about drug related knowledge and attitude among the university students in Mizoram.

Objectives :

1. To study the social and economic conditions of the university students in Mizoram.
2. To assess the substance related knowledge among the university students in Mizoram.
3. To estimate the attitude of the university students in Mizoram about the substance use.
4. To suggest suitable suggestions to overcome this specific issue in Mizoram.

METHODOLOGY

For this study the two universities *viz.*, Mizoram University and Sikkim Manipal University were selected and both of these universities are located at Aizawl. Each 30 respondents selected from these two universities and these 60 respondents are selected through accidental sampling method. The data collection was conducted in the Month of October 2018. In order to attain the objectives of the study, a semi-structured questionnaire prepared which contains the questions regarding socio-economic particulars, knowledge about substance abuse and attitude towards substance abuse. The knowledge and attitude about substance abuse among the students assessed with suitable scale. The percentile score and graphs used in the present study for analyzing the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Among the total 60 respondents, 70 per cent of the

respondents are males and the remaining 30 per cent of the respondents are females. As far as the age of the respondents, 58.33 per cent belongs to the age category of 23-25 years, 23.33 per cent are aged between 26-28 years and 13.33 per cent of the respondents are between the aged groups of 20-22 years, only 5 per cent of the total respondents belong to the age group of above 28 years. For the present study there are two Universities selected one is Mizoram University (MZU) and another one is The Institute of Chartered Financial Analysts of India University (ICFAI) both University represents 30 respondents each. Considering the year study of the respondents, 56.7 per cent of the respondents are persuading their 2nd year and another 43.3 per cent of the respondents are in the 1st year of their study.

With regard to marital status of the respondents is concern, majority of the respondent 78.3 per cent of the respondent are unmarried and another 21.7 per cent of the respondents are married. While considering the educational qualification of the respondent's father, half of the respondents, 50 per cent of the respondents fathers are graduates, while 25.0 per cent have completed 12th standard, another 15 per cent of their father have completed Post-Graduate and 3.3 per cent have completed M.Phil degree and remaining 3.3 per cent hold Doctorate degree. With regard to respondents' mother's education more than half of the respondents (60 %) mothers are graduates, 20 per cent have completed 12 standards, 11.0 per cent of their mother have completed 10th standard and remaining 8.3 per cent have completed their post-graduates. As far as the total members in the family, one-third of the respondents' (33.33 %) family consist of 5 members, another 33.33 per cent of the respondents' family with 6 members, 23.3 per cent of the respondents' family with 4 members and remaining 10 per cent with 7 members in their family.

While asking about substance reduces stress, among the total respondents, 61.7 per cent of the respondents said no and remaining 36.7 per cent of the respondents thought that substance reduces stress. In other words 36.7 per cent of the respondents have wrong belief. Since there are so many mechanisms available nowadays to reduce stress like playing football, cricket, listening music, watching movies, reading books, magazines and the like. Nearly three fourth of the respondents (71.7%) disagreed that substance don't damage health if used in small amount and remaining 28.3 per cent agreed with substance don't damage health if used in small amount.

From this table we may conclude that nearly one third of the respondents (28.3%) have wrong belief that substances don't damage health if it is used in small amount. During initial days drug abusers use substances in a small amount later on they like the taste of substance in due course they become addicted and they started to consume in a large amount of quantity.

Among the total respondents, 65.0 per cent said that drugs increases pleasure of life and another 35.0 per cent of the respondent said abusing drugs doesn't increase pleasure of life at all and these respondents perceived that drugs always harmful to the health. Out of the total respondents, two third of them have wrong perception that the usage of drugs increase the pleasure of life. There are so many ways the individual able to get pleasure like spending good amount of time with family/friends, making fruitful interaction with friends and neighbours, spending the weekends in a useful manners and family outing. Instead of these useful ways 65 per cent of the respondents believe that drugs increase pleasure of life.

With regard to the statement 'substance abusing youth are influential in their peer group', three fourth of the respondents (75 %) think that substance abusing youth are not influential in their peer group and another 25 per cent of the respondents said substance abusing youth are influential in their peer group. All the respondents are studying in two different universities and they are in the age group of youth and during this age group every youth must be very careful to select their peers. Because they spent most of their time with peers instead of spending time with family members, if the peers have good behavior then the concerned individual also adopt good behavior. In other words if the peers have bad behavior then it is also influence others in the peer group follow the same behavior at certain extent.

As far as the statement 'majority of substance abuser are rich people' more than three fourth of the respondents (76.7%) said substance abusers are not only rich people and the remaining 23.3 per cent said substance abusers are only rich people. For substance abuse the richness or poverty doesn't matter. Even the poor people are able to buy substances on the basis of their economic condition and the rich people could effort the quantity as well as the quantity of substance then that of the poor people. If their economic condition doesn't permit them to buy the substances then they steal the money to buy substances once they become addicted (Fig. 1).

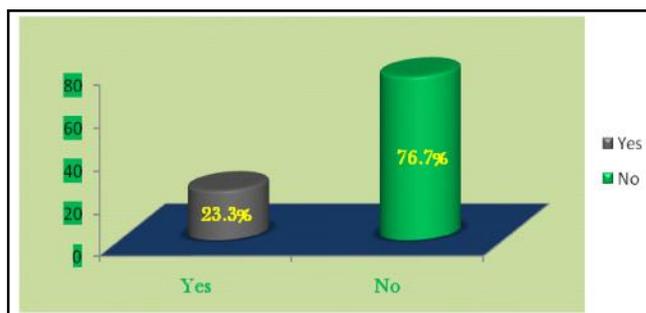


Fig. 1 : Majority of substance abuser are rich people

While considering the statement 'Harmful effects of drugs are only temporary', more than two third of the respondents (68.3 %) said the harmful effects of drugs are not temporary and another 31.7 per cent of the respondents said the effects of drugs are only temporary. Most of the substance abusers initiate such behavior with little amount of substances and if they wonder of the taste of substance then they would increase the quantity of substance and in due course they become addicted therefore the harmful effects of drugs are not temporary (Fig. 2).

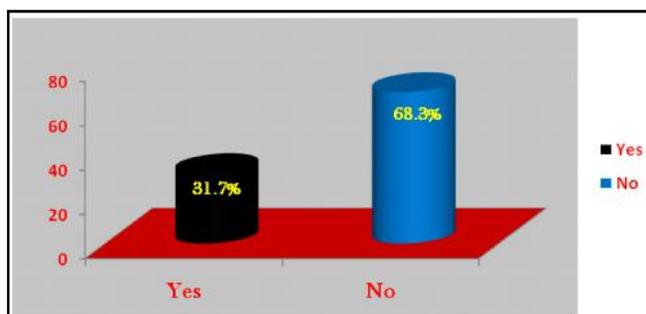


Fig. 2 : Harmful effects of drugs are only temporary

For the statement 'Injecting drugs may cause HIV', 88.3 per cent believed that injecting drugs may cause HIV and remaining 11.7 per cent of the respondent never believed that injecting drugs may cause the disease HIV. Whenever the intravenous drug users injecting the drug with the single syringe needle then it is no problem for spreading of HIV but when they share the syringe needle with others then there will be risk of getting HIV. Because the influence of intoxication the intravenous drug users not able to check whether the syringe needle contains blood or not. Among the respondents, 66.7 per cent said no to the statement 'substance abuser are bad people they should not be help', whereas 33.3 per cent of the respondents said they don't want to help drugs abusers

because of their bad habit. Exactly two-third of the respondents has wrong perception that the drug abusers are bad people. Since they are deviated from the society for one reason or other they became addicted with substance abuse and that a person need counseling as well as guidance to come out from such illicit habit. In due course of time these substance abusers should be helped by others to quit the behavior.

As far as the statement ‘most of substance abuser doesn’t know their harmful effects’, 66.7 per cent of the respondents think that the substance abusers know the harmful effect of drugs while another 33.3 per cent don’t think substance abusers know the harmful effect of drugs. In other words around one third of the respondents (33.3%) made wrong perception that substance abuser doesn’t know about the harmful effects of the substances. Any substances go inside the human body automatically it will make some chemical reactions and this mentioned consequences might be known to all the substance abusers (Fig. 3).

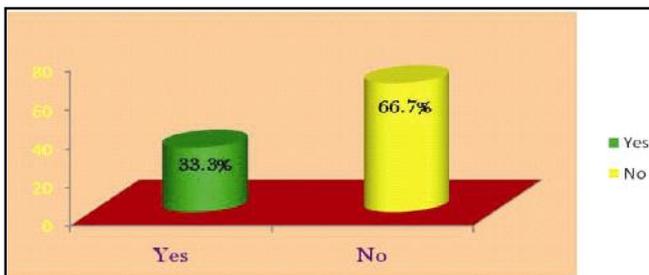


Fig. 3 : Most of the substance abuser doesn't know their harmful effects

From the responses to the statement ‘There is no treatment for addiction’, 85.0 per cent of the respondent believes that there is treatment for addiction and the remaining 15.0 per cent don’t think there is treatment for drug addiction. Around one-sixth of the respondents (15.0%) wrongly mentioned that there is no treatment available for drug addiction but in the real sense there are lot of medical treatments available and these treatments based on the level and physical condition of the drug addicts. Apart from medical treatment, there are varieties of counseling programmes available to the drug addict to come out from the drug addiction.

When asking about whether they are using substance or not, 56.7 per cent of the respondents said they never use substance and another 43.3 per cent of the respondents said they are using substance. Out of 60

respondents, 43.3 per cent of them are using substances and it is considered as very alarming in number and these respondents are in the age group of 20 to 30 years. When anyone started to use substance, it is quite difficult to come out from this deviant behaviour and for this Government need to work hard to curb the said behaviour from this age group (Fig. 4).

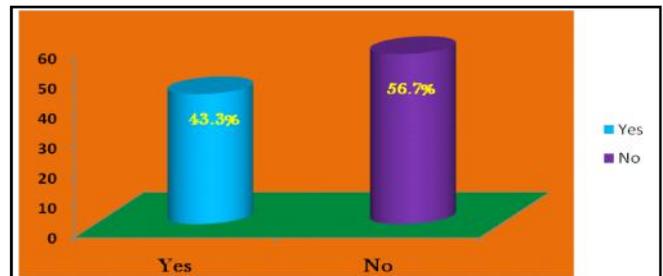


Fig. 4 : Have you taken any substance?

While considering the statement ‘Does any of your friends take substance’, among the total respondents, 71.7 per cent of the respondent said their friends are taking substance and remaining 28.3 per cent of the respondents said their friend never take substance. Compare to respondents, their friends are using substances more in number. From this statement we may assume that the respondents involved in this substance due influencing of his friends and *vice versa*.

When asking question about whether their family members are taking substance or not, 70 per cent of the respondent said their family are not taking substance and another 30 per cent of the respondent are saying that any one of their family members are using drugs (Fig. 5).

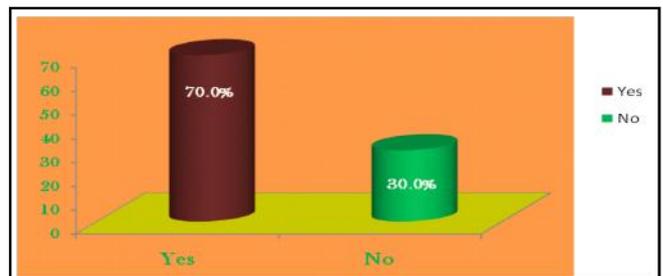


Fig. 5 : Do you have confidence to say no when somebody offers you any substances

With regard to the statement ‘Do you have confidence to say no when somebody offers you any substance’, among the total respondents, 70.0 per cent of the respondents reveal that they have confidence to

say no when somebody offers substances and remaining 30.0 per cent said they cannot refuse when somebody offers any substances. It means that nearly one-third of the respondents (30 %) have lack of confidence about themselves to stay away from the substance abusers and such type of lack of confidence sometime take them to land in substance abuse.

As far the statement ‘If someone takes substance at home there is more risk for such intake in family’, among the total respondents, 81.7 per cent of the respondents said there is risk for taking substance if someone in the family is taking such substance and remaining 18.3 per cent of the respondents don’t think so. Around one-fifth of the respondents (18.3 %) wrongly perceived that there is no risk in the family if someone of the family members used to consume substances. Because when the tender age group people noticed that any one the family members use substance and that would tempt the respondents to use the same.

With regard to the satisfaction of the Government Programme, 90 per cent of the respondents are not satisfied with whatever the Government set Programme for controlling the drug abuse in the state and remaining 10 per cent of the respondents are satisfied with the Government Programme. In other words more than four fifth of the respondents think that the government programmes are not good enough to control the drug abuse in Mizoram and they expect most strongest nature of rules and regulations from the government side to control the drug abuse (Fig. 6).

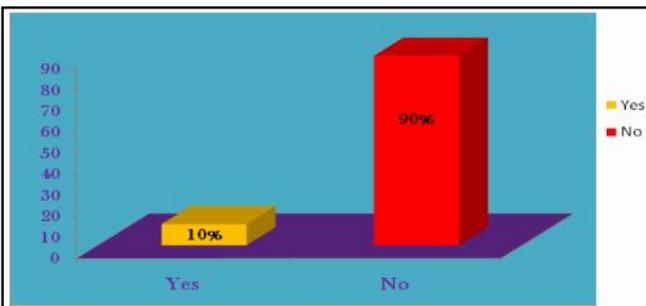


Fig. 6 : Are you satisfied with the Government Programme to control the drug abuse?

With regard to the statement ‘Will you discontinue the relationship with the drug user who is very close’, out of total respondents, 86.7 per cent of the respondents said they will not discontinue the relationship with their friends who are drug abuse and while 13.3 per cent of the respondents said they will discontinue the relationship

with their friends who are drug abuse. For this statement (13.3 %) of the respondents said that they would discontinue the relationship with the dearest person who uses substances and the perception of these respondents might be wrong. Because instead of discontinue they have to maintain good relationship with the drug user and while continuing the relationship they have to give counseling and such counseling might help the drug users to come out from the usage of drugs.

The respondents are also asked about whether the society is given a fair chance to the drug addicts to get involved, 60.0 per cent of the respondents said drugs addicts are not given a fair chance to get involved in our society and 40.0 per cent of the respondents replied our society still give a fair chance to drugs addicts to get involves in different activities.

Among the total respondents, 86.7 per cent of the respondents mentioned that the present legal mechanism is not sufficient to control drug abuse and 13.3 per cent of the respondents accepted that the present legal mechanism is enough to control drug abuse. In other terms more than four fifth of the respondents thought that the present legal mechanism is not sufficient to control drug abuse and they think that the government must strengthen the present legal mechanism in order to control the drug abuse.

From the total respondents 68.3 per cent of the respondents disagreed when asking about youth taking substance only when they quarrel with parents and remaining 31.7 per cent agreed.

While considering the statement ‘Do you think drug user among the youth is increasing nowadays’, Out of the 60 respondents, 80 per cent of the respondents responded that using of drugs is increasing nowadays among the youth and remaining 20 per cent of the respondents expressed not increasing at all. The respondent also asked about whether one need to take substance just to understand the causes of substance, 58.3 per cent of the respondents replied one need to take substance just to know how it effects and the remaining 41.7 per cent don’t think so. From the above inferences, nearly three fifth of the respondents have wrong perception that at least one time the youth must taste the substance in order to understand the causes of the damage made by the substance.

Conclusion :

The present study aims to understand the knowledge

and attitude about substance abuse among the university students in Mizoram. For this purpose two universities selected in Aizawl district and from these two universities each 30 students selected through accidental sampling method and their responses received with the help of semi structured questionnaire. The respondents' responses shows that 31.7 per cent of the respondents wrongly stated that harmful effects of drugs are only temporary and 43.3 per cent of the respondents accepted that they have taken substances in their life and these respondents belongs to 20-30 years and 71.7 per cent of the respondents mentioned that their friends used to consume any one of the substances which is available to them. The respondents above responses indicated that they have wrong perception and using of substances also alarming rate therefore the government must take studious effort to create awareness programme among the students of Mizoram on substance abuse and to control as well as check the availability of the drugs among the student community. Similarly 71.7 per cent of the respondents revealed that they are not satisfied with the effort to control the drug abuse in the state and another 86.7 per cent of the respondents stated that the present legal mechanism is not sufficient to control the drug abuse in the state. Based on the above responses, the government must come forward to review its policies and programmes which are existed at present to control the substance abuse in the state and make change accordingly and such change should definitely address

the problem of drug abuse in Mizoram.

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